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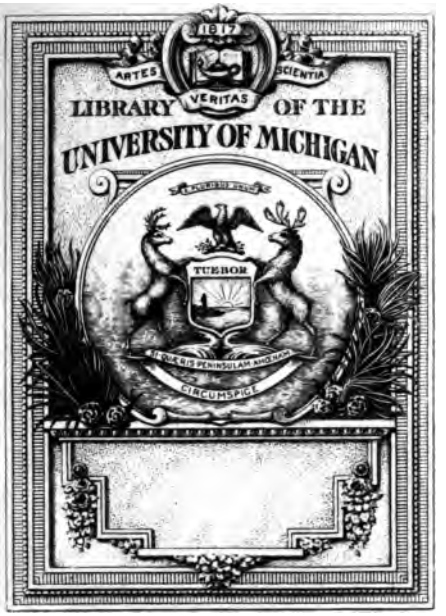

THE GIFT OF
William Warner Bishop

D. Watson, del.

C.

"In the shop sat Benjamin Jeffcot twisting withe withes little Sue sorting them for her blind father's hand, and

A SEQUEL

TO

MINISTERING CHILDREN.

BY

MARIA LOUISA CHARLESWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "MINISTERING CHILDREN," "ENGLAND'S YEOMEN," "SUNDAY AFTERNOONS IN THE NURSERY," ETC.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK:
ROBERT CARTER AND BROTHERS,
No. 530 BROADWAY.
1871.

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PREFACE.

DEAR CHILDREN OF MY NATIVE LAND,

Your welcome to the Tale of "Ministering Children" stands as a happy token that in your hearts there dwelt a responsive feeling. Your welcome to the Tale, and the tidings that often reached me of your acts of ministering love, cheered me through heavy sorrows, and made you in this way to be ministering children to her who had written for you.

The "Ministering Children" of long ago has been followed by many a charming tale from other pens, and I did not think another book from mine could be wanted by you. But as the expressed wish for such another book still reaches me, I have written you a SEQUEL to the "Ministering Children." I shall be very glad if it should have an interest for you, and

thankful, indeed, if it may aid you in the path of active love.

There is one sadness that I deeply feel: many who took a warm interest in the first have passed away, leaving earth poorer for their departed presence, — dear and honored names, leaving us a bright example to lead us on as "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

Believe me,

Your faithful Friend,

M. L. CHARLESWORTH.

SEA LAWN, Oct. 1, 1866.

MINISTERING CHILDREN.

A SEQUEL.

CHAPTER I.

IT was autumn, and Farmer Smith had gathered in his harvest; round stacks of wheat, and barley-ricks, with scented hay, shut in the farm-yard with a substantial wall of promise for the winter. The cattle could fear no scarcity; and already in the barns the thrasher's flail beat out the golden grain. The plough was drawing its long furrows, turning up deep the fragrant soil; and children's hands already dropped the three wheat grains into the holes the dibblers made: its bed, until another year should gather it in, returned a hundred-fold. The leaves were turning gold and crimson; the robin sang his solitary lay; and the soft air, all warm with bright October sunshine, mellowed the orchard's store, and crumbled the moist earth beneath the ploughman's tread.

Farmer Smith was to be seen with eye intent upon his fields, as in the years gone by; his head

was whitened now with snows of age, but his step still trod untired the old familiar fields: the same men called him master, and the land around lay all in perfect order as of yore.

William still served his father with a son's devoted care, and held with general satisfaction the place of steward to the Hall farms around. He had grown into a graver man than might have been expected from a youth joyous and generous as his had been. His forehead was already furrowed by one line of care, and he passed for a reserved and silent man. Men said of him, "He takes after his father;" but his mother had other notions of this cause of growing care, though as yet she said nothing.

Mrs. Smith stirred, as of old, with active step and ready hand within the house. Her form was still erect, but her face had softened into beauty; its hard lines and severe expression repelled no longer — a quiet tenderness was there; her voice still kept its own decisive tone, but its harshness was gone; her eye had kindness in its glance; and her smile, always sweet though rare, now made through all the year a sunshine in her home.

Rose had grown up beside her mother into a lovely village maiden, fair and fresh as the morning, the flower of all the farms around. Brought up by so wise a mother, she had no false notions of life, but by happy labor lightened all her mother's care and Molly's toil, and made her presence every-

where a blessing. Many household arts had been learned by Rose, when visiting in the home of her Derbyshire relatives: these were perfected by practice with her mother, who was skilful in any household work she took in hand. Rose had a closet stored with healing balms for internal use and outward application. There was a traffic of neighbors from cottage and farm, and even tradesmen would respectfully beg for a little attention and aid. Cuts, bruises, or wounds that came of themselves, weak eyes, headaches, and chilblains, sprains, rheumatism and coughs, all thought themselves the better, for these healing balms. Had any one been so presumptuous as to prevail on Rose to change her home, a public appeal from all the disorders around would most likely have arisen to detain her by moral force; but Rose and her mother were so bound together, that nothing but death could part one from the other. Rose, in her happy ignorance of actual diseases, was sometimes greatly puzzled by the descriptions that were given: as, for instance, a poor woman came up to beg for something that would cure her mother.

"What ails her?" asked Rose.

"The 'siplus they say it is, miss."

"I don't know the complaint," replied Rose, vainly pondering on what the disorder might be.

"Don't you, miss? They say it is a complaint that stands cousin-german to tampeny's fire."

Rose was still more bewildered, but referred to

the greater experience of her mother, who said, "You can't cure it, child; I will see to the woman; she means erysipelas and St. Anthony's fire." Or Rose was entreated to come, because the doctor had said he could not go after dinner to "porpoises;" or asked to substitute her remedies for his, because, when "something was wanted just to pose the old mother a little, he had made it so strong that it left her imposing all day." If Rose sometimes objected that she did not know what medicine to give, they would answer, "It's noways particular which, if so be you did make it — 'tis sure to be good." Affection's honest flattery, fully believed by the speaker, though heard by Rose with a doubtful smile, that still questioned, which? But Rose was not the village-doctress alone; her words breathed an influence beyond the necessities of earth, and many an ailing body grew better because she had led the troubled spirit to peace. You might see her of an afternoon, with the heavy farm produce on one arm, carrying up to the shop a store of butter or eggs, and on the other arm her own little basket, in which lay the secret balms that were to pour comfort on some suffering body or mind. And the village would have mourned a second bereavement had Rose passed away as the Squire's sister before.

In the month of September, when harvest was over, Rose went up to London on a long-promised visit to her uncle's house, on which Samson had

silently reckoned since Christmas, though he still gave but small expression to feeling. Her absence left the farm-home unusually silent, but the absence was only for one month; in the third week of October, now close at hand, Rose would come home.

It was ironing-day, and the wash not having been what Mrs. Smith called a heavy one, she was ironing alone as the afternoon drew in, when William came in sight, slowly cantering up the green hill on his old favorite, Black Beauty. The faithful horse kept his spirit bravely on in old age, and William had broken in a young colt called Nora, who bade fair to equal Black Beauty in speed. She was young, as yet, for work, and only used now and then, but no one thought of riding or driving her except her own master, William; Black Beauty still finding it a pleasure to do all the work required. William stabled his horse and came in.

"What, mother, alone at work? That does not look natural! How you must miss your shadow!"

"You had better say my sunshine, I should think," said his mother, "and call me the shade, if you are after comparisons."

William laid his hat on the little table by the door, and sat down by his mother, but he did not seem to have much to say: he leaned his head on his hand, and watched his mother's brisk iron. Mrs. Smith ironed on in silence awhile; then said, in her decided tone, —

"I wonder, for my part, that you don't speak up for that little farm of Broadmeads. You won't be likely to see such a chance again of settling yourself on the land; and lying alongside of ours as it does, why, it would be almost like making one concern of the whole; and then, of course, if you had a mind to marry you could."

"Well, mother, it 's passed through my mind scores of times; and as for the land, I might, I dare say, stand a chance, for no one could behave more like a gentleman to me than the captain has done when he has been over this way. But, I take it, he would not let me have it unless I lived in the house, and I couldn't stand that alone."

"Why, then, can't you marry like other folks, and settle yourself once for all, when you see a good chance, as you should do?"

"I have thought of that, too, mother; but I never cared only for one, and I don't believe I could bring my mind to another."

"And why should you, lad? Can't that one be had?"

"I don't know but she might, mother; only I have seen a fear in the asking, lest you and father should be hurt, and think I had not looked so high as I might."

"As for that," replied Mrs. Smith, "I can't speak to a thing till I know it. I am sure there are plenty no better than they should be, and though it is no

for me to look down upon any, yet I do say, make a good choice or let it alone."

"Well, mother, there's goodness; and not on my word alone."

"Then, lad, that's enough. If we be to look down upon goodness because it is not pranked out with the conceits of this world,— I say, if we be to look down upon goodness, I don't know, for one, what we are to look up to! Certainly not to the God above, for He only is good, and 'tis He must be the Giver if any good thing be here."

"Well, mother, 'tis Mercy Jones!"

"Take her, then, and God bless you! I am sure you may look further and not find a better."

"O mother, 'tis your goodness makes you say so."

"No, my son, never speak of any goodness to me! If the good Lord has lightened my darkness, 'tis only to show me the vainglory of all that's not fashioned by Him; and when you have seen upon any the pure shine of His light, all the show of this world looks dark by its side."

Now William knew that Mercy Jones had been from a child his mother's delight; there was something in her quiet, pleasant ways, that always did win his mother; but William feared what his father might think, and so made answer, —

"I am not sure what father would say, nor how Rose would take to Mercy for me."

"Nor I, neither," replied Mrs. Smith. "Let oth-

ers speak for themselves, I never undertake to answer for them; but, for all that, I should say they are more apt than I to take up with goodness for its own sake alone. And Mercy's a girl that the sun may look full on and not show up a dark spot in her young life, I 'll answer for. Has she not known from a child the Holy Scriptures, and framed all her mind upon them? So, if others be any ways against her, the sooner they are of my mind the better, is all I can say."

"O mother, I have half a mind just to step up and put it to her before I tell father or Rose."

"What, have no words been between you?"

"No, mother; and yet I have often felt a fear she must know, — have almost hoped she did know; and then I thought again, if it never could be, what a trouble, perhaps, I had been making for her."

"Don't go on my word, lad; 'tis your father's that holds both for you and for me, let the thing be what it may: but if he says nothing against it, you may tell her for me she will be as welcome to my heart as the light to my eyes."

William took his hat and walked out to breathe freely. Before him rose, as often before, the sweet vision of Mercy, as she bore, on the day of Jem's wedding, the open basket of fragrant white lilies on her arm, in her bridesmaid attire, side by side with his sister, and even then not less lovely to him. A little taller than Rose, more silent and shy, yet still simple

as a child; so skilful, too, in her ways, able even to please his mother; and why had he never seen her in those brighter garments again? Why did she wear always some grave, quiet color, that none who only liked bright things would care to look upon twice? Was this her lady's wish? Not likely, he thought, for the other maids could dress in smart clothing when they pleased. He almost believed that it was for his sake, because she would be passed unnoticed of all beside him. Countless times had William thought all this to himself, but it had only made him careful and troubled; for he had never grieved his parents, never gone from their word, and in the station he filled they might wish him, he feared, to look higher. But William might have known that we have a Father in heaven, who will order events for the true welfare of those who have lived, as he had done, to honor their father and mother. He stood now on the door-step, and looked over pasture and field; the long, level beams of the set ting sun lay bright on the land, and the foliage of autumn glowed warm in their rays. The clouds rose in the west, heaped up in splendor of purple and gold; all the farm sounds came softened, as they do at the fall of the autumn day, when a deeper tenderness steals over nature, like the gentleness shed on old age, bringing the spirit nearer heaven while the body is sinking to earth. William listened to the sounds of the fold, all blended in music to him, for

his heart gave the key-note of joy. Then looking up, he saw the figure of his father on the brow of a hill, standing out in the sunlight, and he hastened to meet him.

Mrs. Smith had gone on with her ironing until it was done, — it was rare, indeed, for any feeling to stop her short in her work ; but when the last apron was ironed and hung on the linen horse to air at the back kitchen fire, Mrs. Smith did not hasten, as usual, to get the tea ready, but sat down with her irons on their rests, and the ironing-board not put away. The house was silent and lonely. Molly was out milking the large dairy of cows, so Mrs. Smith sat down, almost without knowing that she did so, and looked out through the window, not seeing at that moment anything that was there. Many thoughts filled her mind ; she thought of the past, the birth of William, her firstborn, the pride with which she had reared him, wishing great things for him, how often she had tried to put her own conceit into him, to make him think himself something good ; but, somehow, the boy never would hold himself high, but was always after doing a kind act for others, taking no account of who or what they might be, if he saw them in trouble or want. Mrs. Smith used to say, in those days of her pride, "The boy has his father's nature, not mine ! " It vexed her then when she said it, but now she thanked God who had kept her child from the evil her pride had brought round

him. Then she thought on his starting for London, when her hopes rose high that he would one day be a rich man and live in grandeur up there; she had heard of such things as fortunes made there by country lads who entered London houses of business, and no lad, she was sure, could have more pleasant ways than her William. Yet, with this secret hope, she had made sore work of his going, and vexed all around her because she missed him from the place; all this she remembered with sorrow of heart. And now her first-born son was a farmer for life, and looking no higher than a cottage girl for his bride. But this did not now grieve his mother; her eyes had been opened to see things unseen by the dim eyes of sense. Yet she sat on in silent thought, and a quiet look of sadness was over her face; for when we remember the past, there is much to make us humble, perhaps mournful, in spirit; it is when we look upward to the Love leading us on, the love that forgiveth our sins, and crowneth us with loving-kindness and tender mercies, then it is we are glad and hope brightens within.

While Mrs. Smith was sitting on in quiet thought, — her irons not yet put away, no tea on the table, though the kettle, as it hung from its hook in the chimney, puffed out steam by her side vainly reminding, and the clock struck the late hour of six, — all at once Molly was heard in the back kitchen, her milking over, and Mr. Smith came in at the door.

"What! no tea ready yet?" and he looked at the clock.

Mrs. Smith started and rose, saying, "Well there, now, how I have let the time slip!"

"I guess how it is," said Mr. Smith, in a kind tone, somewhat sad. "I guess how it is!" Mrs. Smith stopped short and stood by his side, and he went on to say, "Our boy has been telling his love-tale to me. I never so much as suspected, I am sure; and it's come on me rather heavy, for all the respect that I have for the girl. I should like him to have married to a few pounds to start with. No doubt she has laid by, with good wages, never wasted on folly or finery; still her savings can be but of small account. I am sure he has often stepped in when he ought to have held back, and eased the burden for us, that I am afraid may lie heavy on him. And yet perhaps not so, if we go by the Scriptures, for they do make mention of a temporal blessing for children that honor their parents, as I am sure he has done. Still, I should have been glad if he had married to a few hundreds, just to help to start him off clear, if he gets the lease of Broad-meads, as I am pretty sure he will; not but what I am sure the girl is worthy his choice, so modest and taking, to my mind, in her pleasant, simple ways. So I told him I would not stand against it; and I fancy with that he has gone off to the Hall; for he told me your mind upon it."

"Well, to my thinking it must be for the best; we needs must consider that there is One wiser than we, who orders his way, when you do but remember how Will's been the making of all. There's Joe, and Sampson, and Ted" — the mother would have said more, but as she named her sons and stopped short at little Tim, her heart failed her, as it did for the most part when remembering him, and she turned away to set the tea. Mr. Smith would have been glad of a few more assuring words from his wife, but she could not give them then. He did not know the deeper current of feeling, and thought her only haste was for tea, and said, "There's no such hurry for tea; William is not in yet!" But Mrs. Smith turned not again.

Molly came in, put away the ironing, and the table was set, its large flap up, for Mrs. Smith never yet measured numbers. There was sure to be a place for the unexpected guest, plates and knives always came in greater number than wanted, and the plain food was plentiful. Sometimes Mr. Smith would say, "Who is coming to-day?"

"No one, that I know of," Mrs. Smith would reply, not aware that her bountiful hand had called forth the question in earnest or play; but the consequence was that whoever came in, it seemed they were expected, or their coming prepared for, and the guest felt at home.

Mrs. Smith was now on foot, and when that was the

case work never hung long. The tea-things clattered cheerfully under her active hand, that ringing sound of coming tea, which brings alike to cottage and farm the sweet feeling of refreshment and home. This evening it might seem Mrs. Smith's thoughts were still wandering, for she spread her table as if for a festal occasion; she brought out not only the usual dishes of cheese, ham, bread and butter, and hot toast, but her home-made cakes, and preserved fruits of the garden, and by William's seat she placed the one piece of family plate, a silver mug left by her father as a legacy to him. Mr. Smith at length gave a look from his arm-chair by the fire, and smiling, said, "What! is Rose expected to-night?"

"Not yet awhile, I doubt," replied Mrs. Smith; "but maybe we shall see another we may be none the less thankful to own as a daughter."

Mr. Smith looked again into the fire, and sat silently pondering on all. It was the habit of the farm never to sit down to table until all were come in. Many looks were often lost from window and door, and much time sometimes spent in merely waiting; and this might seem a loss, but it was not in reality, for in active life such as theirs it gave a brief rest; and a strong tie was formed by the certainty that if one were hindered in return, all would be waiting and watching with the expecting care that imparts beyond all daily incidents the sweet feeling of home. So the tea in the teapot sat

brewing by the fire, and Mrs. Smith took her quiet seat in her arm-chair beside it.

And now it might have been expected that while awaiting his return, they would speak again on the subject of their son William's prospects. But Mr. Smith had fallen into his usual silence; the power to speak freely seemed to have passed for that time, and Mrs. Smith did not feel it easy to begin the question again. She was conscious of a deeper joy in this marriage hope than her husband could feel. When the strong pride that once reigned in her heart had yielded and fled at the voice of the meek and lowly Redeemer, all her worldly self had died with it. Old things, with her, had indeed passed away, and all things become new. Her thoughts were now set on that "gold tried in the fire" which her Redeemer bade her buy; and the white raiment he alone could provide. All who possessed these appeared already rich in her eyes, for she saw in the light of the Lord. Mercy, she was sure, possessed this heavenly treasure, and all the gain of this world appeared poor by its side. Mercy also had been trained as a child in all the work a farm-house must require, and this, in Mrs. Smith's wise estimation, was in itself more real wealth than hundreds of gold and silver could be in such a situation without it. With Mr. Smith it was not quite the same; he had always been a man with a mind humble and true, and when led to look higher than this world,

even for the hope laid up in heaven, he still held on to his honest thoughts of what would best help a man here. He would not now say a word against the wish of his son, indeed he was sure there was not a word that could be said against it. Still he agreed in it because it was his son's wish, not because he felt, like Mrs. Smith, that William had done the best thing he could. But now when her husband's mind came not quite up to hers, Mrs. Smith did not argue upon it, as she once would have done; she waited in silence, and often in prayer, that he might see the blessing for this world, as well as for that which is to come; and as it had always been her way to be silent when approving, her husband was satisfied that silence gave consent.

"Where can the lad be?" said Mr. Smith, turning his eye on the clock; but even as he spoke the mother rose up; her quick ear caught the sound of happy feet hastening in, and as she reached the always open door of the farm-kitchen, the father looked round and saw Mercy clasped in her arms in a mother's embrace. Rising up with a kindling glow at that sight, Farmer Smith held out his hand to his son, then to Mercy, who turned to hear the voice of a father say, "God bless you, my children." And they sat down to the table, a gathered family at once; and the weight of years rolled away from William's brow in that glad evening hour, and the sweetness of the desire accomplished brought back the sunny smile and the buoyant step of his youth.

CHAPTER II.

IT was decided that William should ask Mr. Clifford to stand his friend and make the request for him for the lease of Broadmeads, as Captain Disney, to whom the farm belonged, was a friend of Mr. Clifford's. The tie formed in youth between Herbert and William had never been broken. Herbert Clifford had grown up to find the truth of the proverb, "Old love never rusts." He leaned on his farm steward as on the friend of a lifetime; and William, who had been faithful in little, was now found faithful also in much. He who in his early youth had kept the hearth warm and bright of the widow and the fatherless, and won from his father the old tarpauling to roof in dry the cottage where old Willy dwelt, could not prove oppressive when power was placed in his hands. He was firm to his master's interest, but he was true to the tenants. Driving smoke and cruel draughts were realities to William, and he did not consider the rent of the laborer or the widow honestly taken unless he did his best to get these home miseries away. When trouble befell or times went heavy with the farm-tenants, they

might be as certain of William's consideration and care to plead for them as if they could have told their own tale. Yet sometimes, when they made out that this or that went against them, William would show them how other things were in their favor; he thoroughly knew the work he had undertaken, and could judge between an ordinary or extraordinary pressure.

Mr. Clifford welcomed William's announcement of his engagement to Mercy Jones, and his wish for a settlement at Broadmeads, with a hearty congratulation, and promised to make the application without any delay.

Mercy Jones had long been Mrs. Clifford's only attendant, and the one sorrow that shadowed Mercy's happiness now was the prospect of leaving her mistress whom she had served and loved with all the warm devotion of her life. Mercy had had no common training. Left a little orphan, cherished by her dear old grandmother's fostering care, and her true-hearted shepherd uncle Jem, her childhood was shielded from all blighting evil. Her infant mind had first opened under Miss Clifford's influence, hallowing it by heavenly ties before it met the rough contact of earth. The loss of that angelic lady had deepened and strengthened all little Mercy's best feelings and desires. Then came her early training at the Hall, where the old housekeeper, the large-hearted Mackenzie, had long ruled in faithful service. Then

the special kindness shown to Mercy by Mrs. Clifford, who knew the love her own departed child had for the orphan. Mrs. Clifford employed Mercy to read to her, by which means her mind, open to all higher influences, was educated beyond her station; she was also used in many missions of charity, and her mistress trusted to her in all things. This unusual training had made her more fit as a companion for William than any other, far or near, could probably have been.

Mrs. Clifford rejoiced in the engagement, though a pang passed through her heart, for no other maid could ever bring that strongest earthly tie of an association with her departed child. No ready-made servant could ever be to her like Mercy Jones, who had grown up under her eye, and learned all things under her care. Still Mrs. Clifford rejoiced, though a feeling of faintness passed over her spirit as she thought of turning to a stranger for all the services her advancing years required. "But," she said, "they have both waited long. It is better now than later. I would far rather have all as it is, and see those true hearts united. When I have overcome the separation and strangeness, I shall only rejoice in it too."

Sunday came, and William walked towards the Hall to meet Mercy. She had started early, that they might walk alone by the lanes skirting the park, instead of amidst the gathering people up the

hill-side. They trod the autumnal lanes side by
with that hush of the fading year and the Sab
stillness around, and the mellow sunshine fell
them through the arching foliage above, the
blue of the sky never looking more lovely
when seen through the pale gold of the overarc
leaves. Mercy had put on her brighter a
William saw her again in the very same dres
remembered long years ago, when she stood as br
maid to Patience, — the dress that he then tho
suited her so well. It had been laid up since
time, and when he looked down upon its soft
as she walked by his side, he said, "I remembe
dress; why has it been laid by so long?"
Mercy did not answer, but only returned the
sure of his hand enclosing hers, and felt what it
to be safe under the shield of a noble manh
tenderness and power.

But the Sabbath passed away with its hallo
grace from above, and the week-days came on,
the time for Rose to return. This child of the
was like both the first and the last rose of sum
all welcomed her coming and felt sad when she
There are some whose presence always breath
freshness; they shed sunshine where they dwell,
wherever they pass, a gladness springs up for otl
This is because their hearts are a wellspring
thoughtful love, and the little streams always f
ing make their way all around wherever they

wanted the most. There are others in this world who hoard up their love, to pour it all out in this or that special direction, according to their own self-pleasing choice; and the consequence is that it flows with a torrent force for a time, and then ebbs away, often leaving a barren waste of feeling. Not like the fertilizing streams of true unselfish love, which have the same source and the same end as that "river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High."

William was up with the dawn, rubbing bright the brass harness, for he had a day's work to do before going to meet Rose at the town where the stage-coach would bring her. How sweet the stir of home when the absent are coming! The old chariot of time that has travelled slowly, steadily rolling day by day, finds its wheels suddenly oiled by a feather from affection's soft wing, and flies speedily on. How many looks at the clock as the hours are hastening! How short the time seems for the little things to be done! And then all must be finished, the busy stir over, and the evening gown on, and father within, and the tea-table ready, and all waiting and watching for the loved one's return. May not this picture of home as we find it on earth bear some sweet resemblance to that better home above, where a Father is watching, and an elder Brother making ready, and love more than a mother's will

welcome, and joy be in the presence of th
of God as each child of the kingdom enters

Now Mrs. Smith was getting uneasy on t
tion of time, as she always did an hour at lea
any reasonable ground could arise. "Wha
world can William be after?" said Mrs. Smi
ing anxiously out; "he might be half wa
town by this time." The cow-boy, Adoniz
name, was giving the last sweeping to the st
at the back-door, but he stopped, and looke
stable in sympathetic anxiety. "Now, Dc
run and tell your master William I am afr
be late." But William appeared in sight,
Nora in her bright harness of new burnishe
and brass.

"Just you get me the whip, mother."

"Now, Will, you'll be late! What's th
such smartness if the time be let go?"

"Don't you worry, mother; I am all rig
time. I have never been yet without near
to wait."

William was soon in the gig, the whip in
and the great umbrella in front, though ne
gave a surer promise of a fair autumn
Mrs. Smith and Molly breathed freely whe
was once on the road; and Sukey, traine
Molly in milking the cows, and already int
a servant-girl for Mercy at Broadmeads,
with her milk-pails in light-hearted glee.

It will soon be a tale of the days that are gone, all this calm leisure of life, that can count on being an hour beforehand with time; this repose in the still depths of nature, the rural haunts of sweet woodlands and farms. The shriek of the railway has changed the reckoning of life; the worth of a minute is told by the dial-plate at the stations all over the land; and daily events, which in the still life of the past stirred the heart to its depths, may become, by the rapid succession of all things, only ripples that move but the surface. Let us then retain, if only in pictures, amongst us, the memory of the life that has been.

There was the same patient waiting at the country-town inn as always before. Nora, the young horse, was stabled, and William, less ready for town-talk than usual, walked along the high-road on which the coach would be coming. He took his seat on a stile, watching the distance, and his thoughts travelled between Mercy and Rose. He loved his sister with all the heart of a brother, and she had never had a secret from him, and now that suddenly his long doubtful hope had been changed into this peaceful certainty, he felt as if he had wronged her that she had not known it. And how would Rose take it when she did know it all? What would his quick eye read in the clear mirror of her fair, open face? Mercy was to Rose as a friend, but would she welcome her as a sister? Whatever the first feeling

might be, William knew love for him would reconcile; but that first feeling! it could not be He knew all the changes of that face from a c and had always cared to brighten each troubled into joy; and he felt — he silently felt — that expressive look he must now read would leav impress on his heart forever. But the coach wi sight. Rose looked out as they passed. Wil laid a firm hand on it, and climbed up behind, was there when it stopped, to take Rose from wi Her one box secured and packed under the gig Rose waited in the inn while William saw Nora nessed; she then took her place by William, Nora wheeled them swiftly away.

"O William, I know it! I have heard i ready!"

"Heard what?" asked her brother.

"Why, heard of Mercy and you! Oh, I ar glad; and I always knew it would be!"

So the last doubt rolled away from that fair, b sky, and the orphan Mercy was pledged to Wil amidst the love of his house. So it is when giveth, he giveth abundantly; but then we must low his will, and wait for his time. "Commit way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he bring it to pass."

As they drove home, Rose looked out on all with a quiet delight; each hedge-row and field its greeting for her. The day's labor was over,

husbands and fathers were home, the cottage hearths glowing bright, and the little supper-tables spread; but who was there that did not look out with a smile or a satisfied glance when they saw Rose passing by? "She is home again, is she?" said the old people. "She is coming!" said the children; and the village settled down that evening in content.

We need not tell the joy when the farm gig reached home, and there was mother and father and Molly and Sukey and Dony, the farm-boy, all looking as full of happy leisure for Rose, as if no bustle from dawn had disturbed their repose. And when safe in her own little chamber, she exclaimed, "O mother, you will have another daughter, and a sister for me!" And Mrs. Smith replied,—

"Then Will's told you already?"

"No, not William; they had heard at the Inn, and were full of it there. They said they were sure all must wish him well."

"Ah, child, man's good-will is pleasant to tread on, but our feet must be shod for rough climbing as well."

Sweet it was to Mrs. Smith, when the evening had closed, to draw the white curtains round Rose in her own little bed, and hear her child say, "O mother, there is nothing like home,—no rough places here!"

At the Hall, it was soon known that Mercy was promised to another home, a home of her own. Her pleasant ways, respectful manners, and faithful

heart, had won for her the general kindness of all Most of the old servants had almost a parental feeling for her, with only one exception, and that one was Nurse Brame. Some two years before this time, the Lady Gertrude's devoted maid, — the one who had been her mother's attendant and friend, — left for a short time for medical aid in London, and Nurse Brame had begged to come and fill her place for the time. The Lady Gertrude at first feared to consent, and objected on the ground of the fatigue being too much for her years; but the old nurse would take no denial. So she had her own way, and came into service again for a time. What could be so sweet to her as such service, she thought? There was no failure in bodily power; the high air of the hills, the plentiful table, and the daily exercise, soon renewed the active vigor of the energetic Nurse Brame, or Mrs. Brame, as she was now, called, having for some time given up her attendance as nurse to the sick, — a giving up that the Lady Gertrude had regretted as a lost employment of great usefulness and interest.

The faithful maid, who had left for a time, was never able to return. All that affection could do for her was to provide every means for soothing and cheering her life's slow decline. This was done to the utmost, and Mrs. Brame filled the vacant place, — filled it quite to her own satisfaction, as she sometimes said, "Who should know the right thing and

the right way to do it, if not I, who have nursed my lady from a babe?" The Lady Gertrude had been used in her childhood to submit herself to her nurse, and now did so again, with that quiet composure which always made the best of any personal discomfort, especially when the feelings of another were involved. But household troubles soon began. Mrs. Brame expected to reign supreme in her lady's confidence, regard, and attention. A universal jealousy sprang up in her mind; and, as Mrs. Brame always thought herself in the right, she attributed the sad effects of her own wrong feeling to others. No one was so much the object of this jealous feeling as Mercy. All seemed to have a special kindness for Mercy, and none were afraid of showing it; because Mercy never forgot her own place, never took any wrong advantage of the good-will she won. She had been in the habit of doing many little services for the Lady Gertrude, to relieve the failing strength of the faithful maid now departed. These Mrs. Brame now called "Mercy's upstart interference." She resented any aid from Mercy the more because the Lady Gertrude always seemed to Mrs. Brame to have a special kindness for Mercy, — partly, no doubt, arising from Mercy's devoted service to Mrs. Clifford, partly for the orphan's own sake; for had not the Lady Gertrude been early left an orphan, and did she not know the heart's earthly desolation? But Mrs. Brame had no such perceptions, and the power to impart them belongs not to man.

Three fair children now gladdened the ancestral hall, — Constance, who was seven, Alfred, not yet quite six, and little Maud, the baby pet of two years. Their infant charms graced that English home with sweetest promise for the years to come. The old gray stones, whose walls had sheltered generations few had numbered, the old trees, whose boughs had made the music of the woods around for centuries untold, and the old love within and around the place, all looked down, or seemed to look down, in tenderness and hope upon them, all except Mrs. Brame. She was quite ready to make much of the children, as she often said; but then she expected them to make much of her, and this the children did not understand. "I nursed their mother," she would say; "who should they think of more than me?" The chief displeasure was their love for Mercy. Each little child had often been cradled in Mercy's arms, and had looked up into her quiet eyes, in whose dark depths there lay the sweet expression that wins a child. Their upper nurse was one of those women whose heart of love had room for all. For Mercy she had cared as for a daughter, and the nursery was Mercy's play. All broken toys, all secret plans, all hopes and expectations were imparted to Mercy This Mrs. Brame found hard to bear. But now, length, the outburst came, as it always does, soon or later, when the atmosphere is over-charged w dangerous elements.

Mr. Clifford had received a favorable reply from Captain Disney, which he had communicated to William; and, a few days afterwards, when riding out, with little Alfred at his side, mounted on his tiny pony, Snowberry, Mr. Clifford had showed Alfred Mercy's new home, telling him it was a secret, but he might tell Mercy he had seen it. Alfred came home full of the importance of this great secret, and, hurrying in, he shouted Mercy's name, as he climbed slowly up the long flight of stairs. Not getting a reply, he went to Mrs. Clifford's room, always open to her darling grandson, and, standing within the door, he asked, "Where is Mercy, grandmamma?"

Mrs. Clifford looked around from her writing-table to the door where little Alfred stood. "I don't know where Mercy is. Come and tell me what you want."

"It is a secret, grandmamma. Can you keep a secret?"

"Yes, as well as you can, I think," replied Mrs. Clifford.

At this Alfred looked round to be sure of the door. Then, standing on tiptoe, he whispered into the listening ear stooping down to him, that he had seen Mercy's new house, and he was going to tell her all about it.

"Shall I ring for Mercy?" asked grandmamma.

"Oh, no!" replied Alfred; "I must tell Mercy all alone; for it is a secret, and no one must be near." So little Alfred went on his way, still shouting, "I want Mercy."

In a few moments, Mercy and Mrs. Brame appeared in sight. At sight of Mercy, Alfred claimed, "O Mercy, I want you! You must with me quite alone; I have a secret to tell And, taking hold of Mercy's apron, he drew into his mother's room, and shut the door mor cidedly than was civil to Mrs. Brame, who wa standing outside. This disrespect to Mrs. B was the worst occasion of offence that had yet ar for the children, both by nature and training, not wanting in the sweet courtesies of life; bu weight of this secret had overbalanced littl fred's good-breeding. Mercy had seen the gather on Mrs. Brame's face, and vainly tri persuade Alfred to put off the secret.

"You must listen now, Mercy; there is nc can hear. Papa said you might tell, only i secret! I have seen your new house, and it is a pretty one, all green leaves growing ove stones! and the sun shone like gold on the win only I don't know what is inside."

Unhappily for little Alfred, it was the time f in the nursery, and Sally Millington, a brisk y woman, who served as under-nursemaid, was lo for him. Meeting Mrs. Brame, she asked, ' she seen him?" And, when Mrs. Brame foun tea was waiting for Alfred, she said, "I wil him; I know where he is," — glad of the oc for breaking in on the secret, and exercising h

thority. Reopening the loudly-shut door, she found Alfred still intent on the secret. Taking him hastily by the arm, Mrs. Brame said, —

"You must come with me, sir; you are wanted at tea!"

"Not just for a minute, Brame. I know Cox will wait for me; I want to tell Mercy a secret."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Brame; "you must come directly, and not keep every one waiting for you."

"Did Cox send you?" asked Alfred.

"I am no nursery maid," replied Mrs. Brame; "you are to come because I tell you.'

"Go now, Master Alfred," said Mercy, entreatingly; "do as Mrs. Brame tells you, and I will come after tea."

"I will not go unless Cox sends for me," said Alfred, "not until I have told Mercy all the secret."

"We shall see about that," said Mrs. Brame, taking Alfred in her strong arms to carry him off.

This was treatment quiet new to the boy, and, raising his little hand, he struck Mrs. Brame.

Mrs. Brame, still more indignant, secured her little prisoner's hands, and carried him off in wrath to the nursery. Betty Cox, hearing a very unusual commotion, opened the door, when, to her surprise, she saw the heir to the House of Clifford struggling in Mrs. Brame's arms, his hands held in her hand. Such a scene had never been witnessed before, and Betty Cox stood mute with surprise.

"There!" said the indignant Mrs. Bram have brought your young gentleman; you ma look ashamed of him; I am, I am sure, and let his behavior be known to his parents."

Poor Alfred, when set free, rushed to his side, then, turning round to face his enem claimed, "Go away, naughty Brame! go a and, before Betty Cox could stop him, he another hearty slam to the door.

"What is all this about? Have you for yourself? Come here and tell me," said Bett in her own quiet way, sitting down on her lo sery chair. But Alfred was too much disquie tell his own tale; and as one rule of Betty's discipline was "never to vex a child whe trouble was on him," she only said, "Now yo ters want their tea, I must attend upon them she smoothed his ruffled curls with her hand, his tears, and did all she could to calm his d But Alfred could not eat; he soon climbed to place on his nurse's knee, and ended his trou that day by falling asleep on the white folds neckerchief, pillowing his little head on her bo

CHAPTER III.

MERCY did not venture to the nursery until she knew the little ones would be in their cots. She found Mrs. Cox watching by Alfred, with an anxious look on her quiet face. It was a relief to Mercy to tell out all her trouble. She had long felt Mrs. Brame's jealous temper and hasty manner, but she had not spoken of it to any one before; now she feared some further trouble for the boy would arise out of this evening's displeasure. Mercy was crying over the tale when the Lady Gertrude came in to look at her sleeping children, and, seeing there was trouble, inquired the cause. Mercy told all that had befallen, and Mrs. Cox concluded the account with the scene at the nursery-door. Lady Gertrude sat silently listening, and looking on the flushed cheek of her sleeping boy. At last she said, — "I am glad to have heard of this trouble first from you. I have long seen that all was not right with Brame, but I did not expect such a struggle as this. I am very sorry on every account; but sometimes a storm clears the sky, and we must hope it will be so in this case."

Mrs. Brame found amongst the housel evening a distant behavior and short answer Millington had given her own account of test, and, not knowing how it began, had by her own imagination the cause. Tl much displeasure downstairs, the men say "Master Alfred had always behaved like a man, and been treated like one until then, a was no putting up with the bad tempers of All this did not soften Mrs. Brame's spi the Lady Gertrude, who would gladly ha left alone for that evening, found Brame in waiting, with a face of discontent and dis Brame was silent at first, not having quite her own mind as to what course to take. uncomfortable with every one; no one treate she felt she ought to be treated; no respect, tion, and yet who had so much right to exp she had — the oldest servant of all in the It could not be ignorance on the part of th for she had told them all, times without num reasons for showing her respect; she had set claims, and exercised her authority, but it of no use; the whole set were alike — not on than another: there was no respect for age, n for long service!

These were Mrs. Brame's thoughts of th hold. She did not turn her mind's eye bac who it was that whispered these thoughts

heart; if she had done so, she would have seen they were all whispered by one on whose hard forehead was written, in plain letters, PRIDE. But Mrs. Brame thought not of this. Then she began to blame the children as ungrateful, and her master, and even her own Lady Gertrude, for not seeing that a proper attention was paid to her. She felt greatly hurt and displeased, and thought she would tell them all, once more, plainly her mind. Then, again, poor Brame feared that this would not be much use; she had often tried it before, and with no good results. Then PRIDE suggested to her, had she not better express her utmost displeasure by saying she would go, and not put up any longer with their unbecoming ways? But perhaps this might please them; they might wish to get rid of her! No, the power was hers to go or to stay, and she would use her power, and she would not leave them in peace until they behaved better to her. The difculty of deciding what to say had kept Mrs. Brame silent; Lady Gertrude soon spoke, saying gravely, but gently, "I am very sorry Brame, to hear of your trouble with Alfred; how was it that you got into a contest with him?" Then Brame looked up in double displeasure to find that her lady had already heard the tale; she gave her own history of Alfred's behavior, and added to it her own sense of the wrong done to herself by the disrespect and want of feeling shown by all in the house. The outpouring was

long, but Lady Gertrude let the pent-up stream have its way, and when Brame had exhausted both herself and her words, she said calmly, "It is too late to talk this over now, Brame; and you are hardly fit for it to-night, I fear. To-morrow evening I shall be alone, and we can talk quietly over the past and the future. Let us both think over it until then, and ask to be shown a happier way than that of separation to end all these dissensions."

Upon these quiet words Mrs. Brame retired; but the thought of that one word, "separation," laid hold on her heart. Ivy Lane in its dimness rose up to her view; her solitary room and the lonely life there looked dreary, without all the sweet faces and pleasant ways of the Hall. For Brame had a true heart, capable of strong affection; but pride and self-will had darkened the light within her, and she saw things in the false colors cast by pride, not in the light of humility and truth.

A cold, desolate feeling chilled the heart of Mrs. Brame. She thought it was caused by others; but it was the effect of her own self-will and pride. Every one who indulges pride and self-will will find, sooner or later, a cold, cheerless void left within; and the tender mercy of God does not meet them with its softening love, the stone within will not melt, the chilled heart warm again.

Lady Gertrude had dismissed Mrs. Brame from her presence, but she could not dismiss the pa

subject from her mind. She had trained her little son in self-control; he had tried his best and gained the victory in many a hard struggle; but now she was not by, he had lost himself, and perhaps would lose heart in fresh efforts for the future! Not so, Lady Gertrude! when we learn by our falls to take faster hold of the Hand that leads us, and not to set one step without that fostering care. Yet the occasion was sad, and the trouble not new; and she, who seldom wept now, was giving it her tears, when a voice behind her said, "Gerty, my own darling, in tears!" and smiling through them, as knowing he would chide her for failing spirits in the strife, she looked up to the face of her husband — that fine expressive face, where courage, gentleness, and tenderness had all made a home. "What is it?" he asked, as he knelt by her side. Lady Gertrude told the story of Alfred and Mrs. Brame, and then her fear that she had made a mistake in yielding to the entreaties of her old nurse to allow her to come as an inmate of the house. She had heard it said, "Old servants were seldom peacemakers in a house," and she began to fear it was true; for Brame was far more ready to complain of the faults of others, than to try her best to improve them.

Herbert listened to all, and his own boyhood's trouble rose up in remembrance, as it had done countless times in his life, with a breathing of assurance and blessing. And he said, "A disappointment

does not prove we have made a mistake — d
It may be only to try our perseverance in t
and the very disappointment and trial may
right means to success in the end. When
an object in view, and get hold of some disa
ment or trouble in the way, I am ready t
then I must be all right for the end. 'Throu
waves to the shore' is true of countless bl
in life, and will be of this. Don't let us give
old nurse of your childhood; she will come a
at last, if we wait in patience and trust. W
ask the wisdom that we lack, and our Divine
sellor will not only give it, but do exceeding
dantly above all we ask or think."

These assuring words were enough, and
spread its wings over the slumbers of night.

Little Alfred awoke with a still heavy hea
told all his trouble to his dear old nurse.
Cox's strict sense of justice made it rather
her, in this case, to express all the censure
felt as if she ought to give; so she wound up he
reproof by saying, "Brave men never fight w

Little Alfred was scarcely dressed when he
his father's step coming towards the nursery
fred had never been afraid of that step befo
now he ran to the inner nursery, where Mr
was dressing his little sisters for breakfast; b
papa's voice called "Alfred," and Alfred w
him.

"What is this I hear of you, Alfred? Tell me, did you strike a woman; and an aged woman, too?"

"What is this I hear of you, Alfred? Tell me, did you strike a woman; and an aged woman, too?"

"I did give Brame one thump, papa."

"Then I am ashamed of my son! You will never win your spurs, nor be one of those true Christian knights you are so fond of hearing about, if you strike at women. You should live to take care of them, and comfort them in trouble, and never make them angry, but learn to govern yourself."

"I am quite sorry, papa; is Brame very sore?"

"Poor Brame's heart is very sore, because you did not do what she told you, and struck her. You must ask her pardon before you come downstairs, and tell her you are sorry, and will mind her word the next time. I will write you a little lesson here with my pencil, and Cox will teach it to you. You must repeat it to me every morning when you come down at breakfast, that you may never forget it." Alfred's father took a card from his pocket and wrote, not with pencil, but with ink that stood by:—

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty;
And he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city."

"He who reigns within himself, and rules
Passions, desires, and fears, is more a king;
Which every wise and virtuous man attains."

Betty Cox taught little Alfred his lesson day after day; and when both he and she knew it perfectly she laid up the little card, saying, "I will give him that again, when maybe his need will be greater than now."

When the children had had their early nursery breakfast they always went to their mother's room, but this morning poor Alfred's courage was gone. He knew he had given way to passion, forgotten his mother's oft-repeated lessons, and he could not bear to see her look sad for fault of his. "Will you take me?" he said, reaching up his little hand to his nurse: so Mrs. Cox went with them to their mother's door. Alfred looked up into the sweet sadness in his mother's face, and when she stooped to kiss him he clasped his little arms around her neck, and sobbing said, "Mamma, Alfy's so sorry!" The mother put her arm around her boy, while Constance and little Maud, in a sad surprise, said their morning's prayer; then Mrs. Cox herself, that morning, carried little Maud, while Constance stepped by her side, down to their papa. And the mother and her child were left alone.

"Alfy," she said gently, "God sees our tears when we are sorry for our sins, and he forgives, and comforts us when no one else can. I was sure you would be sorry when you thought what you had done. The Bible says, 'Even a child is known by his ways;' and if your way be one of self-will and passion, it

must be far off from the way of the holy child Jesus, who was meek and lowly in heart. Will you kneel down and pray to him now?"

Little Alfred knelt down, but he could pray no prayer that morning except tears. Well that mother knew the language of tears; they had often been her heart's deepest prayer in childhood and youth; she was content they should now be her child's. Silently she prayed for him; and when little Alfred looked up and said again, "I am sorry, mamma," she answered, "Then we will ring for Brame and tell her so. Brame was good and faithful to me when I was a little child, and I want you to be very kind to her, and take care of her, and make her happy now she is old."

Mrs. Brame appeared in answer to the bell. She looked taken by surprise for a moment when she saw Alfred in tears by his mother's side.

"I am quite sorry, Brame; do forgive Alfy, and I will try to be good always again."

"I hope you will, Master Alfred;" and Mrs. Brame said no more. Had there been only this one hard thought in her heart, it would no doubt have melted under the child's tears and confession; but pride had reigned over her until she had hard thoughts of all, and she turned away from the child and from his mother's kind words with a feeling unsoftened because still unhumbled. Alfred went down with his mother, and when the door opened

little Maud sprang up on her papa's knee, sl
"Alf! Alf!" It was plain her infant spirit
his tears. Constance gave her little brother
but said nothing, knowing silence is a veil ove

"Papa, I have told Brame I am very sorr

"That is right; now you must do all you
comfort poor Brame, and make her forget
trouble."

"I will try, papa. Can I be a brave knig
do?"

"I hope you will be a brave man. A brav
is never ashamed to confess a fault; he has c
to say, 'I ask your pardon; I am sorry for
have done; I will do my best for the time to
It is cowards who are afraid to look back a
their faults, and so try to hide and deny them.

"But, papa, what would a brave knight
woman carried him away as Brame carried m

"Such things do not happen to brave knigh
brave boys have courage to bear a disappoir
and hold back their secrets for another time.
is the first battle every true soldier fights, Alf

"I don't know, papa."

"A true soldier's first battle is with himse
he never gives in until he has conquered -
quered himself. You fought with poor Bran
were obliged to give in; but if you had fougl
yourself, you might have won the day, like
soldier."

"How fight myself, papa?"

"If you had put down your angry temper, and stood the disappointment like a man, and said, 'Thank you, Brame, I will go; you shall hear all another time, Mercy;' then you would have won the day in a hard fight. But you forgot then that you were a soldier, forgot the Banner you fight under, and forgot your Captain's eye, Alfred. Do you remember all now?"

"Yes, papa."

"Who is your Captain, Alfy?"

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, papa."

"And what is written on his banner?"

"'God is Love,'" Alfy answered.

"Then, you see, you lost the day because you, a poor little soldier, forgot the Banner, and forgot your Captain. You must remember that he saw it all, and you must ask him to forgive you and to teach you how to conquer yourself; then he will own you as his own little soldier, and you will gain the victory through him."

As they went into the hall to morning prayers, Alfred took his mother's hand and said, "Mamma, I am going to ask our Lord Jesus to teach me to conquer myself;" and the mother missed the bright young brow, and thought of the hour when she pledged her boy in faith as the soldier of the Cross, and her silent spirit looked up in earnest supplication that he might indeed fight manfully under that

anner, and continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end.

The household were all assembled at prayers. Brame looked still unbending and stern; there was a shade of trouble on Mercy's sweet face; and Mrs. Cox gave one anxious look of inquiring care to little Alfred. It so happened, that the Holy Scripture in the course of reading for the morning was the fifth chapter of the First Epistle of St. Peter. When the words were read, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble;" it was as if the words had been chosen for the occasion. It is well worthy of observation how continually the portion of Holy Scripture, chosen without reference to the events or words of the day, yet is found to have a direct bearing upon them: this is the infinite embracing the finite. Little Alfred listened and heard them; it was to him the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ binding on his obedient heart the lessons and precepts his parents had taught him, and, young as he was, he never forgot them. Mrs. Brame heard them also, but they passed unheeded by her, for she had not as yet the spirit of a little child; and our Saviour has said, that except we humble ourselves as a little child we can even enter the kingdom of heaven.

Little Alfred looked up at Mrs. Brame as

went out. He saw the displeasure on her face, and thought it must be because she was unhappy, and he had not comforted her. Poor Brame! she was not happy; she had never been very happy in her life, for she had always found occasions for unhappiness around her; and those who do this in childhood and youth will be sure to find these occasions for increased unhappiness as they grow older. The young in years, if they wish life to be happy, must always look out, on all occasions, for the blessings that every pathway abounds in, rejoicing in these with thankful hearts to the all-gracious Giver. If they do this, a light will be reflected on trial, and they will learn, as life advances, that most wondrous truth, that even in the pathway of tribulation "the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Alfred did not stay downstairs, as usual, until fetched by Sally Millington, but climbed the long nursery staircase alone. He did not feel quite happy because he had not said the words of his own morning prayer. He found no one in the nurseries, so he went to his own little cot, where, kneeling down, he prayed his morning prayer, and added these words of his own: —

"O Lord Jesus, forgive Alfy for all I have done; teach me to be a good soldier and conquer myself, and make Brame quite well and happy. Amen." Then he said, "Our Father, which art in heaven," as he always did, and rose up content.

Betty Cox had heard the little step upon the
and hastened into the nursery; but from the
room she heard the low, sweet prayer; and
Cox, in her own heart, prayed little Alfy's p
with him, then left the nursery again that he
not feel disturbed. It is not all children who
such a nurse as Betty Cox to pray for and with
but every little child may have a Friend in hea
pray for them, and to put their prayers int
heart of their heavenly Father.

Betty Cox left the nursery when the short p
was ended, and went herself to fetch Constanc
Maud. Little Alfred found himself still alone
now he began to think what he could do to
Brame happy. Those who really pray for o
always try to do all they can to comfort th
trouble. Alfred thought a little while; then h
membered his last little toy,—the greatest fa
of all,—which his papa had brought him from
don not long before. It was a little mouse tha
by itself; not a living mouse, but a mouse
wheels inside, wound up like a watch, and
wound up, it would run very fast round the
This, he thought, must make Mrs. Brame
happy; it was the greatest treasure of all his
but he did mind about that, if he could only
Brame happy. So he folded it up in his pin
held the little key that wound it up so tight i
hand, and went to look for Brame. His g

mamma was the delight of Alfred's heart. Nothing could be done without her; he always found her ready and able to listen, and all his little plans were told to her. So on his way he knocked at her door. Mercy opened it.

"Your grandmamma is not quite ready, Master Alfred; you must come again presently."

"No, Mercy, that will not be in time. I do want just to whisper to grandmamma now."

Grandmamma heard, and answered, from within, "Come, then, and tell me."

Alfred looked at Mercy, who understood in a moment, and, stepping outside, shut the door and waited there, delighted to see again the bright, eager expression on the face of the boy, — happy herself because he was happy.

Alfy unfolded his pinafore, and showed the long tail of the mouse. "Grandmamma, I am going to give this to Brame. I want to make her quite happy; but no one knows; don't tell, grandmamma; now I must go." And, scarcely waiting for the kiss that so often pressed his brow, Alfy hastened away; he gave one kind look at Mercy, when he saw how safe she had stood outside the door, and went on to his mother's room, where Mrs. Brame was most likely then to be.

"O Brame, I want you!"

Again the door was shut heavily, and Brame felt a softening come over her, at the child wishing to be with her alone.

"Brame, look here what I have brought in my pinafore for you. Can you guess, Brame? something so pretty!"

Mrs. Brame stood by the child, but she did not guess; she did not try to guess, for she never saw any use in guessing.

"Cannot you really guess, Brame? then I will show you. I have brought you my own dear little mouse!" and Alfred uncovered a tail.

Mrs. Brame started and shuddered. "What has the boy got? Let it go, Master Alfy! here, child, let it go!" and she seized, in her dismay, on the tongs from the fire-place.

"O Brame, don't be frightened! it wont hurt you, indeed. It is my own little mouse; it is not alive, it goes with a key;" and Alfred drew out the whole mouse from the folds of his pinafore.

But Mrs Brame still held the tongs in her hand, for the little black eyes of the mouse glittered bright, and he might well be suspected of life.

"Look, Brame, he is such a beauty! and he goes with this key, and I will give him to you to play with when you are alone. Wont it make you quite happy? And if you cannot wind him up, I am sure Mercy will."

But Mrs. Brame was still hardly recovering th shock. At length, when Alfred had fitted the key the hole on the side of the mouse, she felt persua it was only a toy, and exclaimed, "Well, they a

be at their wits' end to manufacture a mouse! Such pests, to be sure! I hate the sight of their peering eyes and ugly tails. I would not have the thing if they made it of gold! Why, they used to run about almost by the dozen in my room in Ivy Lane; and Smut, my old cat, if he only saw a tail, he was sure of a bite."

Little Alfred looked disappointed and rather bewildered; but, going back to his purpose, he said, "I wish you did like my dear little mouse, for then I could give him to you; and now I don't know how to make you quite happy!"

"I am sure you are a darling," said Mrs. Brame; and a tear of remembrance started quick to her eye, as she thought upon yesterday. "I am sorry I was so cross. I am a poor, cross old woman at best; but you shall have your own way next time!"

"No, Brame; papa says I am a soldier, and I must conquer myself. I know what papa means. Do you know, Brame?"

"No, dear, I don't."

"Papa means I must keep down my bad tempers, and mind what you say, and mamma says I must make you quite happy; but now you don't like my little mouse, and I don't know what to do."

"Should you like a real, live mouse?" asked Mrs. Brame, her aversion to the creature yielding to the pleasure of the child in his toy, and the boy's generous feeling waking up her own in response.

"Yes, I should like a little live mouse very much. Can your old cat get one for me?"

"Poor Smut! No, he's dead and gone; but I think I can order it, for all that."

"Did your cat die?" asked Alfy, in a tone of compassion.

"Yes, indeed; I lost him. So of course he was killed, or he would have come back again. Should you like me some day to tell you about him?"

"Yes, do," replied Alfy; "tell me now."

But Betty Cox stood at the door. She had been looking for little Alfred herself, afraid to trust a messenger so soon after his trouble; and now she stood at the door, not a little surprised to find him in solitary companionship with Mrs. Brame.

Alfred turned to his nurse, saying, "Brame will tell us a story about her poor cat, who died. Will you come after lessons to-day, Brame? Because, you see, it rains, and we cannot go out."

And Mrs. Cox hoped Mrs. Brame would come, and Mrs. Brame promised.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. BRAME had never made any attempt to relate a story before. And now, to go to the nursery by engagement, to know her story was an expected interest, to have to relate it not only to the children, but before Mrs. Cox and Sally Millington, —all this had rather a formidable look to Mrs. Brame, as any one can well understand who is committed for the first time to a public recital. Mrs. Brame began to call up the forgotten past, to collect her materials; but she found she must trust to the moment for compilation and expression. Added to this, Mrs. Brame did not feel quite herself; her spirit had been vexed in the last two days; and, though she tried to brave it out, and think every one wrong but herself, still a softening hand had come over her under the love of the little ministering boy, who had brought her his favorite toy in the longing to make her happy. And, with this softening, there came a misgiving whether she had been quite right herself in all she had done and felt towards others. But the time arrived, and Mrs.

Brame, who had never failed in a promise, made her way to the nursery, and found all in readiness there. Constance had made what she called "a little house," with chairs in a circle, — a large chair for Mrs. Brame and small chairs for herself and Alfred. Betty Cox, on her low nursery-seat, was at work, constrained by Constance to sit in the circle, little Maud at her feet; and Sally Millington by the nursery-table, also at her needle. The elder children rose to welcome Mrs. Brame, and conduct her to her chair. Mrs. Brame felt unusually nervous, but made the best of necessity, and began: —

"Before I came up here, I lived in Ivy Lane. I had a comfortable room there, respectable enough and quite sufficient for one; but it was a lonely life. I had not a friend, not one I could neighbor with, no one to care for, and none who cared for me. It was enough to try the spirits, a life so lonely as that."

"Did no one live there?" asked little Constance, with sympathy.

"Yes, indeed; there were people in plenty, but no one respectable enough to make up to me; but, having once settled there, I did not care to move. The houses had been good in their day; but they were a great age, and some were grown over with ivy, the stems as big as my arm. It was my native place. That gave me a fancy for it. My parents had a whole house and kept a shop there, when I

was a child. I remember the ivy then, and the old look of the place.

"The houses were as old as they could be to stand, and yet handsome and good in their way; but some of them were run over with rats. If I had once seen a rat in my room, I could not have stayed to see a second; but, somehow, we had nothing but mice. I set traps till I was tired, and loathed the sight of dead mice. Then the woman below, who let out the rooms, said there was a stray cat about, and, if I liked to entice it, it would be glad enough of a home. Such a cat I never had seen! You could not tell its color; it was not black, but something near that, and I called it Smut. It had a lean, savage look, and seemed fierce enough to kill mice by one flap of its paw. I cannot think, now, where it came from; for there were mice enough in Ivy Lane to have fatted cats by the dozen. Well, I enticed him with a little milk and a bone, now and then; for, I thought, anything to be rid of the mice! though the look of the cat at first seemed almost as bad. He soon made a home by my fire, and sat washing his face and purring away, until he grew as fat and as sleek as the best cat you could see. He was a monster for size, and such a handsome cat, too! Every one who saw him was envying me. And as to a mouse, I never saw and scarce heard one. He was so fond of me, and had ways like a dog; and I found him quite company in my lonely life there, for I had

given up what nursing I once did, and was always at home. He never once strayed away; and so we lived on, until it was fixed for me to come here, and I began to think what I should do with Smut; for cats are such creatures for places, I knew he would not settle up here at his time of life. And now comes the sad part of my story.

"There was a young lady used to come to our house, very young to be in and out there alone; for she was nothing more than a child for age, I am sure, though she had pleasant ways above her years. They said she did wonders; she had such a gentle way with the rough men that they minded her words and she persuaded the women to keep things more tidy, and the sick thought her an angel. But for all that, she was poor, they said, and it was not for her gifts that they cared for her; for they fancied she sometimes wanted comforts herself. I don't know how that might be, I am sure; for I never troubled myself about other people's concerns; but they said that her father was an officer, quite blind, and his property lost, so he only lived on his pension; and she had no mother."

"Did she look very unhappy?" asked little Constance.

"I can't say I took any notice of that," replied Mrs. Brame; "she always spoke civilly when I saw her, and would ask how I was, if my door stood open; but I never asked her in, for I had no mind

to have any one come looking after me; but when I found I was going, I thought I would ask her in the next time that she came, and find out, if I could, what really did bring her so often about in that persevering way. There was a man, too, lying bad in the house in a decline. I had never been in after him, for it was not my way; but I thought as this young girl was often there, I might hear all from her. So the next time that I heard her step pass my door, — I always knew the light foot if my door were ajar, — I stepped quickly to it, and asked her to come in. But a wretched dog came in after her, such a dog, too, for size! and, before I knew what I did, Smut looked this way and that, and made straight up the chimney. I never was so angry before; I shut her out and the dog, and called and called up the chimney till my neck ached for days. I kept milk on the hob, but it was all of no use. I dare not light a fire to boil the kettle for tea, but put on my bonnet and went straight for the sweep; he searched the chimney, but said there was no cat up there. Oh, what I did feel when I first lighted a fire! If I could have had my way, that dog should have died for the mischief he did me that day, and a good riddance, too, to get such a wretched, starving cur put out of the way, and so I told the young lady when she came to inquire. She was beginning with excuses for him, but I had no mind to hear them, so I wished her good-day, and shut the door, for what use were excuses? — they could

not bring the cat back to me. Well, she went and had him cried; I heard the town-crier myself; but that was no use neither, for it never brought him back.

"The next week the woman whose husband was dying spoke to me on the stairs, and said the young lady laid it greatly to heart, and that the dog was not hers, but belonged to a blind man who made baskets at the end of our lane; she, I suppose, had a feeling for him, her father being blind. The woman said she always took the dog something in a little basket on her arm, but that day she had nothing, and the dog, seeing the basket, followed her without her knowing. Well, I said, it might be so, but my cat was gone, and all through the means of that good-for-nothing dog. The woman turned away and said, "If you were not shut up so close you would know more about these things than my words can tell you!' After this I had nothing more to say to her, for what business had she to remark on my ways? When the wind howled in the chimney, how often I thought it was Smut! but he never came back any more. The young lady did not know I was going away, and the day before I left to come here she came to my door. I said I was busy, but she opened her shawl, and on her arm there sat the handsomest kitten I think I ever saw, with a little red collar on. She said she was so grieved for what had happened. She hoped I would forgive her and the poor dog, and ac-

cept this kitten; she knew that its mother was a capital mouser. Well, I am afraid now I did wrong, for I never told her I was going away: I did not want to tell her my affairs, so I only said, 'Kittens were not in my way, my old cat suited me.' So I let her go, but I saw the tears in her eyes, and I wish now I had asked her in and said something civil."

The story of Smut kept up the children's interest, but did not brighten their faces, and when it ended, they looked round at Betty Cox.

"Poor Smut!" said Betty Cox; and little Maud echoed "Poor 'Mut!"

"I wonder where Smut is?" said Alfred to Betty Cox.

"I should not wonder," said Mrs. Cox, "if Smut were sitting again in his old place on the hearth."

"No!" said Mrs. Brame, "do you think so?"

"I think it very likely," replied Mrs. Cox. "Cats are curious creatures; I have known many facts about them you could hardly credit."

"Where is the young lady and that pretty kitten?" asked Constance.

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Brame.

"Did she cry because you would not have the kitten?"

"I am afraid she did," replied Mrs. Brame, "and if Smut should be safe after all, I shall not know how to forgive myself, for I had been worrying my mind to know what I should do with him when I

came here." Mrs. Brame saw that her story had rather a dismal effect, and whispered to Alfy, "I shall see about a real little mouse!" Alfy smiled; Constance looked in wonder what this secret could be; but Alfy said, "Come here in this corner, Consy, and I will tell you; I am to have a real live little mouse, to run without a key, Brame says so, but it is quite a secret; you must not tell, for I want to surprise mamma!"

And why is it that a secret has such a power to charm? that not childhood alone but older life yields to its spell? Its mystery lies deeper than our nature in the heart of our God. He reveals his secrets to those in communion with him. "The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." The closer we live to the heart of our God, the more of his secrets shall we learn from him, too blessed to find expression in words, thrilling life with a joy that the stranger intermeddleth not with, and ever deepening and strengthening the tie that binds us to him in confidence and love.

Mrs. Brame left the children, but not now with any self-satisfaction. She had told the tale of the past, but even while she recalled it, it fell hard and cold; she did not know why, it seemed to her a different thing now; but the reason was that the love of that ministering child had touched the heart of Mrs. Brame; he and his little mouse had crept

into it together, and found it warm within, and left the door open for others. Children can often do work that those older might fail in, — they can enter hearts that are shut against others; if only their longing be to make every one happy around them, He who was once a child will show them the way.

It was a heavy day to Mrs. Brame; her thoughts kept wandering back over these scenes of the past, and each time with less approval of herself. She made an excuse to visit the nursery again, but only little Maud was there, and Sally Millington at work. On seeing Mrs. Brame, little Maud exclaimed, "'Mut! 'Mut!" and Mrs. Brame said, "How like the babe is to her mother. I never knew her to forget the trouble of which she heard when a child!" Mrs. Brame retiring, Sally Millington snatched up little Maud, and careering round the room, sang as she danced, —

"Smut's in the chimney,
Dance and sing!
Smut's in the chimney,
Ding, dong, ding!"

But this roundelay had not the desired effect; little Maud did not laugh nor crow; and on finding herself again on the floor she pointed to the fire, saying no less gravely again, "'Mut! 'Mut!" upon which Sallie Millington was compelled to give up her attempt to turn tragedy into comedy for little Maud.

The evening came, and the Lady Gertrude sent for Mrs. Brame, looking forward with but little hope to the result of the interview. Lady Gertrude had often tried to show Mrs. Brame her mistake in one point or another, but it had always failed. Brame had a reason for all, in some fault in others. This evening Lady Gertrude thought within herself, "It is no use to try and show Brame that she is wrong in giving way to her temper; I can only fall back on the Word of God, and give her a precept by which to test her life from that Word; it may show her what I cannot, for 'the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light!'"

"Now, Brame, I promised this evening to talk over our troubles together."

Mrs. Brame had almost forgotten the trouble of yesterday. All the hard feeling of that had melted away under little Alfred's warm care to make her happy; but she was not at rest, — her thoughts were still wandering over the past. She felt a misgiving of not having been in the right, and a bewildering sense of all things had come over her; she wanted something to guide her, more certain and clear than her own erring judgment. So it is that, when the time is come for the arrow of the divine Word to penetrate, the heart is prepared to receive it. He who ordains the one, orders also the other; while often no link of earthly connection exists between the two. These both "worketh that

one and the self-same Spirit," whose first beam on the soul is conviction of sin.

"I want to find out, Brame, why you are not happy amongst us, as I had hoped you would be. It often grieves me to see that things are not pleasant to your feelings, nor to others around you. It should not be so, because you are my oldest friend in this house. I want you here to help me, and I am sure this is your wish."

Mrs. Brame was silent; she could not give the self-justifying or self-excusing answer, that at any former time would have been ready.

After waiting awhile, the Lady Gertrude spoke again: "I have been thinking much of you all the day, Brame. Your comfort must always be dear to me; and I am sure, when others are not at ease with you, you cannot have real peace yourself. We know the Bible contains a key to unlock every difficulty in our daily life, if we have only the patient trust to look until we find it. It appears to me that there is an exhortation given us by our Lord, that, if obeyed, would help you out of all that disquiets you now. You remember his words when he says, 'Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the highest, for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye, therefore, merciful, as your Father also is merciful.' This is our rule as given us by our Lord himself, and we

cannot take one part of it and reject another. He says, 'We are to do good and lend, hoping for nothing again.' Is not this the key we want? 'Hoping for nothing again!' Now it is quite right that you should have the love of the children, and the respect of the household, and the consideration of all; but the mistake is in always being on the watch for this, expecting it as a right, not receiving it as a free gift. The Scripture we know cannot be broken, and, therefore, the only way of success is in following that way in which the word of God leads us, and he says, 'Hoping for nothing again.' The very reason why you have not these right and pleasant things may be because you forget this divine rule, and look for them. I know it is not an easy thing to us naturally, but it is the only Christ-like way of doing good; and it is not until we are able to lose the thought of ourselves that we can find how true, even in this life, are the words of our Lord, 'Your reward shall be great;' for, 'in keeping his commandments there is great reward.' Tell me, Brame, is not this the secret cause of your want of personal happiness, and of your failure in making others happy? Does it not lie in the not observing those few clear, strong words of our Lord, 'Hoping for nothing again?'"

"I don't know, I am sure," replied Mrs. Brame.

"Then, Brame, will you not try to find out whether it is so or not? Set this one rule before

you, walk in the light of it, and you will soon discover whether you have the secret key to open your difficulty."

Mrs. Brame was silent.

"Who can help you on earth, Brame, if not your own old child and friend? I want you to find out for yourself whether you have remembered this commandment to do it."

"No, I am afraid not," at length Mrs. Brame replied, "nor any other. I am a proud, hard old woman, and there is no good in me!"

Mrs. Brame's heart had melted within her. She poured out this confession with tears. And the Lady Gertrude wept with her — a gush from her heart of thankful love as she said, "Dear Brame! We have found our right level when we learn out that truth, that there is no good in us; from that point our way is upward — the pathway that shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. 'If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.' You and I are bound by a new tie to-night, the strongest by which friends can be bound, the light and love of that Holy Spirit, whose first teaching is the convincing of sin. Let us often speak of these things, and our life together will soon gather blessings it has not known before." Lady Gertrude, as she rose to go, stooped and kissed her old nurse, and they parted

in deeper feeling than had ever united them before.

That night the aged woman knelt in the same humble spirit as the little child in the morning. She could only weep forth the words, "I have done the things I ought not, and left undone the things I ought to have done, and there is no health in me!" But she remembered the promise, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," and, in the faith of that promise, she lay down to sleep. Yet, in her waking hours, life's retrospect was sad; how could it be otherwise with one who had lived to herself? What is there in self to repay us at last? What but a blank that can bring us no return save disappointment and vexation of spirit? When Brame slept, she dreamed one while of that young motherless girl, the blind officer's child, turning away from her unrelenting face, with the kitten on her arm, and the tears in her eyes. Then she heard the words of the poor woman again saying, "If you had not lived shut up so close, you would have known more of these things than my words can tell you!" and she awoke with a troubled heart, and a feeling of life gone, and all its opportunities of blessing passed, not to be recalled any more. There was anguish in these feelings, for the light of truth revealed the past, and she needed none to condemn her now, — her own heart did that.

Then she saw in her thoughts little Alfred standing before her, looking up with that dear, earnest face, saying, "I want to make you quite happy;" and the child seemed to her a little messenger of heavenly love, and she felt she was not forsaken; for he had touched the secret spring, and by his self-forgetting love opened the frozen fount of affection within her. Mrs. Brame rose the next day with a sadness quite unlike all her former displeasure — a sadness so gentle that it made others gentle, and had more of the sweetness of heaven in it than any feeling ever seen in Mrs. Brame before. She felt the altered tone of the voices around her — a kindness lay in them that to her breathed of forgiveness; and what can be so blessed to the heart that feels its transgressions, as the sense of forgiveness on earth and in heaven?

CHAPTER V.

WHEN the children came to their mother's room the next morning, Mrs. Brame was there. Alfred looked up at her, and she read again in the child's speaking eyes the question, "Are you quite happy now?" and under this solicitude there sparkled a thought of the live little mouse. Mrs. Brame had not been used to think of little pleasures for others, and until now she would certainly have considered that to purchase a mouse was as great a folly and waste of money as could possibly be. But, as we said before, Alfred had knocked at the door of Mrs. Brame's heart, with his little mouse in his hand as the palm-branch of peace, and Mrs. Brame had taken both in, the child and the mouse, and all the warmth of her feeling was glowing round them now. Indeed, Mrs. Brame felt almost as eager as a child to find the best way to get, as soon as might be possible, this live little mouse, that the boy might feel the grateful response of her love to his! This wish to give pleasure was new to Mrs. Brame, and it was like a mountain stream in its first flow down its rocky bed, dashing impatiently along, making

itself all-important by its murmur and spray; not like the same stream when years have worn it a deep channel, and it glides silent and softly along, and you only mark its presence by the verdure it leaves on either side as it flows.

Mrs. Brame decided in her own mind that Mercy would be the best person to consult about the mouse. She did not fear any resentment from Mercy for the troubles now past, for a sense of forgiveness had come over her heart. So, the first opportunity she had, she asked Mercy whether she could put her in the way for getting a live mouse, saying she thought perhaps Mr. William Smith could manage it for her, if he would be so kind? Mercy gladly promised to inquire, and when she asked William, he said he would send Mrs. Brame any number she wished, with very great pleasure, alive and in good condition, just fresh from the barns; but if Mrs. Brame would like a superior sort of mouse, there was a man in the town who tamed little brown and white mice for sale. He was going in to market alone the next day, and if he might offer Mrs. Brame a seat in his gig, he should be most happy to drive her in, and go with her to the man; or if she preferred, he would bring her out a mouse on approval. Mrs. Brame was much pleased with William Smith's proposal to drive her in to the town the next day. She felt a great respect for Farmer Smith and his family, and now that light from

heaven was shed on her pathway, its fair hues fell on all things around.

Then to get such a mouse as little Alfred would not expect; a little brown mouse, and tame, and so quickly, too, before the child's expectation had cooled by delay! Mrs. Brame was very much obliged, and would certainly go. "Should she walk down to the farm to start with him there?"

"No," replied Mercy, "he would be most happy to drive up to the Hall and take her from the door; so the plan was settled, and Mrs. Brame was to go the next day at eleven. All day Mrs. Brame, at intervals, thought of the mouse, and the pleasure of the child, and the going in to procure it. But when evening came, and Mrs. Brame was alone in her room, here thoughts crowded in on her mind. She was going into the town; she must needs be there for some hours; should she revisit Ivy Lane? She had never been there since the day, nearly two years before, when she left it to live at the Hall.

Mrs. Brame had no friends in Ivy Lane; she thought there were none there for her to make friends of; she did not know as yet that our having real friends depends far more on ourselves than on others, and that real friends may be found in every station of life. Mrs. Brame had looked with hard eyes on all, and they never gather into their focus the tender lights and shades that are reflected from

every neighbborhood of our fellow-men. So poor Mrs. Brame had no friends to revisit. But she could not forget Mrs. Cox's surmise, that perhaps, after all, Smut might still be living there, content on his old hearth without her. Then Mrs. Brame thought again of the blind officer's child, and the lean dog that came with her on that fatal day when Smut fled up the chimney; and he was the blind basket-maker's dog, at least so Mrs. Garson had said, — the woman whose husband then lay dying. Mrs. Brame did not know the blind basket-maker; it was the low end of Ivy Lane where he lived, and Mrs. Brame made a habit of avoiding that way; but, of course, he was poor, and why should a poor man keep such a dog? That went against him, Mrs. Brame thought.

The morning arrived — a clear, healthful autumn morning. Mrs. Brame was ready before time, and twice took out her purse and counted five shillings. It was not Mrs. Brame's habit to carry much in her purse; she said if the money were not with you, you were less likely to spend; to spend and to waste seemed to express one and the same idea to Mrs. Brame; and probably this was the reason why, in the course of a long life, she had spent very little. Mrs. Brame had dividends in the bank, some shares in gas-works that lighted the town, besides a rather large hoard that was laid up in her chest. Mrs. Brame liked the feeling of wealth; she

thought it raised her to a higher position in life t could be claimed by the poor; it gave her imp ance, entitled her to respect. But that cannot truly our wealth which may at any moment be s arated from us. The only true riches are those fi which we cannot be parted, — a treasure laid up the heavens, and safe in the hearts of others, eter immortal like ourselves, the cause of rejoicing ever. And the comfort is, that the gold and silver may be turned into these true riches h Centuries ago many men spent their time and t skill in trying to discover a stone that would t all things to gold; even kings thought it wo while to try experiments with this hope; but stone could never be forged in any laboratory h Yet there is such a one dropped from heaven i hearts open to receive it; its name is Charity, excellent gift of God; it turns all things to the t wealth of heaven; gold tried in the fire, those t riches that no moth nor rust can corrupt, and thief break in to destroy; and when the final e mate of true wealth is taken, some of the poorest this world will be found amongst the richest fore

On this market day five shillings did not app so large a sum as before to Mrs. Brame. T made her count it twice; it was five shillin neither less nor more. A mouse could not much; why, then, thought Mrs. Brame, should this five shillings be enough? What could be

use of taking more, to bring it back again, and run the risk, perhaps, of losing it? This was only common sense; yet just at the last, Mrs. Brame hurried again to her chest, took out two sovereigns, and put them safe in her purse. It was an impulse, she could not tell why; and so she started, comfortably buttoned into the farm gig and William Smith to drive her, not with young Nora; he feared the skittish ways of the young horse might alarm her, he said; so Black Beauty drew them steadily along, and looked, as Mrs. Brame kindly observed, "remarkably handsome."

The drive was a pleasant one, as it was likely to be with two persons disposed to be pleased, and a horse who took a quiet pleasure in trotting along. It was agreed to drive straight, as usual, to the Golden Fleece, where Farmer Smith always stabled his horse; he used to say he was afraid the house was not much the better for custom from him; but the innkeeper would not allow this, saying it was custom enough to have him known to frequent there.

When the horse was stabled, William was to accompany Mrs. Brame to the house of the poor man who sold mice, and then the meeting for the return was to be at the "Golden Fleece," at half-past three o'clock, as William was always home from market in good time for the early farm tea. On arriving, Mrs. Brame waited until William was ready in the inn-parlor. Her appearance entitled her to

respect; but William found an opportunity of whispering to the landlady, "Mrs. Brame, from the Hall!" upon which all due civilities were abundantly offered. William soon appeared as her escort into the town; and Mrs. Brame's respect for William did not lessen as she observed how many merchants, farmers, and tradesmen, took pleasant notice of him as they passed along. They crossed the Cornhill, walked the length of the street where Mr. Mansfield's large shop looked as flourishing as ever; then they walked down Stone Lane, and came out into Friar Street, where, in a little bit of back garden, behind its more respectable houses, lived a poor man who had built up his own wooden cottage, which he shared with a pale little elderly wife, and creatures that, in earlier days, Mrs. Brame would have described under the sweeping term of vermin. But Mrs. Brame was now capable of entertaining a feeling of regard for a mouse, and she stood without a perceptible shudder in the midst of brown mice and white mice, and little squirrels whirling round in vain hope of a nut. Mrs. Brame still retained her composure, though peering eyes and long tails turned in every direction. She was greatly divided as to the purchase of a brown mouse or a white; and as William considered it a question of taste, he did not like to presume to give an opinion. But the pale little old woman put in her advice: "Now the best way of settling is just to buy in the two, and this

lovely little house for them both to bide in; there's a chamber and parlor all lined soft as down. Now have it complete, or I know you'll be vexing to think you just left it for the next as steps in."

The little inhabited house did look tempting to any one not possessed with a natural aversion to mice. And Mrs. Brame thought of those dear eyes that had looked up to her with such a great disappointment when she would not welcome the toy; of course he knew nothing of the plague that mice were, when he expected her to be delighted with his! Yet she pondered still, and stood undecided. Mrs. Brame did not see the anxious eye of the poor merchant in mice, how it watched her in fear and in hope, for rent-day was near, and the balance wanted in hand would almost be complete if that purchase were made; but how could Mrs. Brame stretch her imagination so far as to suppose any second reason for the purchase of mice? "What are they?" again inquired Mrs. Brame.

"Now," said the little elderly wife, "only just one shilling for the brown mousey, and two for the white, and eighteen-pence for the little house they bide in, and two such toward dears you won't light on again. If you will believe me they have slept under my pillow, and run about at our meals, now in this plate, now in that, just nibbling a bit where they please, as sensible, too, as if they had not been born mice!"

Mrs. Brame gave a shiver, but she paid down the

money, and returned the sixpence in change to her purse, not without a secret feeling that it would prove as the letting out of water, and that she should never again have the firm hand she had before over pounds, shillings, and pence. She did not see the gleam that suffused the face of the seller of mice, nor the twinkle of joy in the gray eyes of his pale-looking wife. But these things were so, though Mrs. Brame saw them not, and her purchase had lightened the load weighing down two honest hearts on that day. The little brown mouse and the white mouse were packed in their snug house, with small holes for breathing, and William took them in charge, for it was not possible that Mrs. Brame could feel comfortable with two little mice in her pocket or bag. Final arrangements were again made for the return home in the evening, and Mrs. Brame left the close quarters of mice.

Mrs. Brame now determined to revisit Ivy Lane. She had time on her hands, and her thoughts turned on Smut. She soon reached the Lane,—it looked dreary and dull after the fair haunts of her present abode. Her eye soon fell on the old familiar house; the door was standing open, the woman who let the rooms did not seem within. Mrs. Brame went up the old familiar staircase, wide and easy, with a hole here and there, and other signs of a not very distant decay. She passed the door of the room where poor Patience lived when a

child · that room was a small one, and had afterwards been occupied by the poor woman whose husband lay dying when Mrs. Brame left the house. The door was shut, and Mrs. Brame supposed the widow might be living there still. Then ascending to the second floor, the door of her own pleasant airy room was before her. She knocked at the door, and a sharp-featured woman looked out, and Mrs. Brame said, —

"May I step in for a minute? I once lived in this room, and I felt a wish to see it again, and to make an inquiry of you."

"Pray, walk in," said the woman; and she offered a chair.

The room could hardly be thought the same; its walls were dirty and ragged, the floor was unswept, and two or three children, unwashed and ill-mannered, looked most uninviting. Mrs. Brame inquired, —

"Have you, since you lived here, seen a cat about the place? a large smoke-colored tabby!"

"Not in here," said the woman; "I have no room for cats, and I have not been here more than a month; but I have seen such a cat on the stairs: he keeps, I think, with the widow who lives in the attic above. I hear the bailiff is coming to sell her up to-day, so there will be an end for her and the cat."

Mrs. Brame rose up in impatience from her seat, and saying, "That no doubt is the cat," she wished

the woman "Good-day," and climbed the steeper old staircase that led up to the attic above. The door before her was open, and Mrs. Brame looked in. The little room was poorly furnished, indeed, but all was neatness and order; the fire-place was empty and swept, and by its side on a stool sat a child thinly clad, her elbows on her knees, her face hid in her pinafore, which was wet with her tears. Before the child sat a cat of large size, not sleek as if high fed, but in good condition, as one who found no lack of mice. The cat did not turn at the step of a stranger; he was looking up at the child as if in sympathy with sorrow.

"Why, Smut, I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Brame, and she stooped to caress her old favorite. But Smut had no memory for the friend of past years; "out of sight" was "out of mind" in the affections of Smut, and finding himself suddenly uplifted in the arms of a stranger, he put out a strong paw with sharp claws at the end. Mrs. Brame set him down with a pat of displeasure, and he took up his place still closer to the child. Mrs. Brame seated herself on a chair that was near, with a feeling of vexation that cannot well be described. She had taken in the cat in his outcast condition, fed him, caressed him, fretted over the loss of him, and all for what? for a savage scratch when she saw him again! Had this befallen Mrs. Brame only a few days before, she would, it is to be feared, have

turned away in disgust, and said there was no such a thing as gratitude in the world! quite forgetting that she had only made one trial, and that with a cat, and that even Smut might reply he had paid well for his lodging by catching her mice. But to-day Mrs. Brame did not turn away; the door of her inmost heart had been opened by one little ministering boy in his self-denying love; and the heart that has been once opened does not readily close up again. Mrs. Brame looked from Smut to the child, and asked, "What ails you? What are you crying for? And how came this cat here with you?" But the child gave no answer, and still hid her face and her tears. Mrs. Brame did not know how to get a reply. In her surprise at seeing Smut really before her, she had forgotten what the woman had told her below; but steps had been heard on the staircase, and a poor widow came in, leading a delicate-looking little boy with a broom in his hand. The poor widow looked a moment at Mrs. Brame, in surprise, and then said, —

"I beg your pardon, ma'am; had you heard of your cat?"

"No," replied Mrs. Brame; "but I did come to inquire, and found you had taken him in."

"He came back," said the widow, "the week after you left, and tried hard for his old place, I suppose, in your room; but the door was kept locked, and the next lodgers who came were no friends to dumb crea-

tures, and my children took to him; and so, as no one else had a kind word to give him, he followed us up here, and he is wonderful fond of the children, poor things!" And the widow's voice faltered, and she turned away as if to hide the emotions she could not repress.

Mrs. Brame felt ashamed to refer to the trouble in which the poor woman was when she left nearly two years before, because she had then shown her no kindness; and hardly knowing what to say, she replied, —

"There were plenty to praise up the cat when he sat by my fire. I should have thought many would have been proud to own him for their own."

"I don't know," said the widow; "I suppose 'tis trouble shows the true friend!"

Mrs. Brame looked up, as if by constraint, on the face of the widow. The face was calm, though worn and pale, as with the trouble of years. She looked as one who had long contended with want, and was yielding at length to the stern grasp of woe, and parting with spirit before she parted with life. The poor woman sat down on a chair by the window, with the aspect of one who had nothing left on earth to strive for again. Mrs. Brame had never felt so much at a loss what to say, for there is a sacredness in sorrow that shields the broken-hearted from the rash intrusion of common inquiry. Mrs. Brame looked again at Smut; the little boy had left

his broom, and laid himself down by the old cat, softly stroking him with his little thin hand the whole length of his soft shining back. Smut stood upon his four feet, and stretched out his long tail, and returned the caress by an affectionate purring. The girl had ceased crying, and looked down on her little brother and the cat, but the blank sorrow in her face did not yield its expression.

The widow looked on her children tearless and calm. She knew she was dying, that her earthly life could not be long, and that day the stern necessity of workhouse arrangements was to part her from her children forever on earth. She had toiled day and night, for each hour was precious that kept her children still in her sight; but work had been slack, the prices had fallen, and sometimes her feeble strength, too, had failed. No one had been hard on her; she had been allowed to try on; but the rent of her one room was now owing, past her own hope of repayment; the bailiff was coming, and the bitterness of death was even now passing over her soul, for its only bitterness to her was separation from her children.

Mrs. Brame broke the painful silence by asking the little boy what he did with that broom? The child looked up at his mother, who answered for him.

"It was the only friend we have on earth who gave him that broom,—Miss Campbell, who attended my poor husband to the last. It cut her to the

heart to see us come to want, and she not know how to help, for she is a friend to them that need it, if ever there was one!"

It seemed a relief to the poor widow to speak out from her full heart the love it felt for a friend. Mrs. Brame knew well who it was, but asked again,—

"What use could a broom be to the child?"

The widow had broken off in her answer, forgetting the broom, lost in thoughts of her friend, but she now answered again,—

"Miss Campbell went to London, and said hundreds of little boys earned an honest penny there by sweeping the crossings, and Sammy could but try. So she bought him a little broom, and set him at a corner near home, where the market traffic lies, and he sweeps the crossing clean, and he has never had a rough word, and often brought home a penny. I have just been to fetch him, for we must part here to-night. I wanted him to sell his broom, seeing it was the child's own; and the child was hungry, I knew; but he said to me, 'O mammy, she gave it me! and she always smiled when she passed me, and looked on my broom!' I am thankful, I am sure, she don't know our trouble; she is away now with her father."

"Had you not three children?" Mrs. Brame inquired.

"Yes," said the widow; "the little one soon followed his father!"

"That was a fresh trial for you," said Mrs. Brame, though with a secret feeling that a poor widow must be better off with two children than three.

"Yes," answered the widow. "There's such a miss in the babe! But God took him in mercy. 'Tis not God's parting, but man's that's the hardest to bear!"

Just then a man's footstep was heard on the stair The poor widow knew the signal; she clasped her hands and looked up — a silent appeal to heaven for strength in that hour. Mrs. Brame felt the shock, for she guessed whose was the footstep, having heard of the bailiff from the woman below. She looked at the widow, at the children, at the door. The man had not entered yet. "Take comfort," she said, rising hastily; then hurrying out, she pulled to the door after her, and stood before the man. "I wish to pay you the rent for this poor woman," said Mrs. Brame. "What is the amount?"

"That must be settled with the woman below," said the man; "it is she who has the letting."

Mrs. Brame went down stairs with the bailiff. But it was not long before she climbed the long staircase again with a more eager step than she ever climbed it before. She opened the door, re-entered the room. The poor woman still sat where she had left her, her little boy clung to her knee, and Mrs. Brame heard him say, "O mammy, shall we still have a home?" Her other child stood by her side.

"The rent is all paid up to the end of this quarter!" said Mrs. Brame; "let this be for food!" And she laid all the change from her two pounds on the table by the widow. The poor children looked on it in bewildered astonishment, then at their mother. The widow looked up again, her thin hands clasped to heaven: "My God hath sent his angel, and shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me!" she said. Mrs. Brame heard the words, but before the poor widow could turn to her, Mrs. Brame was gone.

CHAPTER VI.

WIDOW GARSON sat for a few moments overpowered by surprise, almost stunned by this sudden deliverance in the last moment, when all earthly expectation was gone. Then, warmed by the glow of life and hope reviving within her, she clasped her children to her heart, as though the lost had been found; and, kneeling down with them beside her, she wept forth her thanksgiving to God. It was long since a tear had cooled her burning cheek; it had seemed as if the fountain of tears were dried up within; but when they flow no more for grief, they will gush forth in joy, if gladness should yet again surprise the spirit on earth: and the widowed mother wept freely with Rachel and Sammy.

When, recovering a little, they looked again at the money, and thought of the rent paid to the end of the quarter on which they had entered, they felt encompassed with comfort; and the little heap of silver that lay on the table shone bright as a mirror, in which their longing eyes saw reflected food and

firing and clothing, and all the destitute need. Oh, well is it written, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble." Widow Garson exclaimed, "See, my children, how we have proven the truth of that blessed word,—'God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think.' I did beg but a shelter to keep you by my side, and see, here is food and firing enough and to spare. Would that I could tell that dear young heart that weeps over us, how our heavenly Father has supplied all our need — and by Mrs. Brame, too! Who could ever have thought it? But you mind, children, we will read that chapter to-night where it is written, 'My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor my ways as your ways;' and then how it says, 'For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth.' How like it is to this, I am sure! It seems to me as if it had dropped down straight from above. We will buy a sheet of paper and send off a few lines. How long it seems before she can hear! But perhaps He who has given it to us may be comforting her up with trust in his mercy; so we must just wait in patience."

Little Sammy was again on the floor, gently stroking the large head of the cat. "Mammy," he said, "I think Smut is just like the ravens that fed the Prophet Elijah: hasn't he brought us bread?

Do you think that God sent him? because, mammy, I do; and I think we had better read the chapter about it."

"So we will, Sammy; and we will buy Smut a little milk, too."

"There, Smut!" said little Sammy, "do you hear? Mammy says we'll buy you some milk! — milk!" and Sammy sprang up, in the excitement, to his feet.

"Now I will step down and speak to Mrs. Simpson, and then I will run on to your poor uncle Benny. He is sorrowing for us, and little can he think how it's turned into joy! Here's a shilling, Rachel, and you can go to the shop and get a loaf of bread, two ounces of tea, a quarter of a pound of brown sugar, and a little salt butter. And you, Sammy, take this shilling, and buy a bushel of coal and a bundle of wood. Go with Rachel, and don't lose your money."

"Mammy, may I run in and tell little Sue and Uncle Benny that they must come in to tea?"

"Yes, if you want to be first with this good news; and say I am coming to tell him all about it directly."

Widow Garson took out another shilling herself, and tied up the rest of the money in the corner of an old pocket-handkerchief, putting it safely away in her drawer. Then she hastened downstairs to speak to Mrs. Simpson, the woman who was employed to let out the rooms, and who lived below on the ground-floor.

"Well, here's good fortune for you!" said Mrs. Simpson, in a tone of more kindness than might have been expected from so rough-looking a woman. "I am sure I am thankful enough. I was then on the point of stepping out; for I couldn't stand to see the widow sold up, and those children sent adrift without a roof over their head."

"Then it's all right?" asked Widow Garson; "the rent standing clear?"

"Yes; paid on to the quarter. Who could have believed it? That close-handed old woman, that I never knew give a penny all the years that she paid down her room's rent to me!"

"I believe that He who sent her knew what was in her heart," replied Widow Garson. "I pray he may reward her."

Then Widow Garson hastened on to the end of Ivy Lane, where the blind basket-maker lived, by name Benjamin Tovel, with his only child, little Sue, and his faithful dog Sharp. In the basket-maker's little shop, Widow Garson found Sammy, with his arms round little Sue's neck, trying to comfort her tears, though she cried then for joy; while down the pale face of the blind man flowed the same tears of thanksgiving.

"Well, neighbor," said the widow, "you have heard the good news?"

"Yes," answered the blind man. "So unexpected and sudden, it's quite overcome me. And yet, now,

it seems to me we should have looked for deliverance. But it's come, and we can only say, 'He has put a new song in our mouth.'"

"Well, Master Tovel, you will come in to tea with us; we shall soon have it ready. How little I thought ever to sit down there in peace, with my children beside me! It still seems like a dream."

"Now, little Sue," said Sammy, "don't you cry any more. See here, I have a shilling, and I am off to buy coal; and Smut is to have a dish of milk for his tea; and, dear old Sharp, you come too." And Sammy ran off for his coals and his wood.

Sammy found Rachel in the small general shop, waiting her turn to be served. The woman looked more than once at the child, as she had heard the report of the widow's things being sold up that day; and the happy face of the poor girl, and the shilling in her hand, looked like some mistake. But when little Sammy came in, he ran up to the shop-mistress, who was stooping to ladle flour into a bag for a man waiting beside her, and, getting close to her ear, Sammy whispered, "Mammy's rent is all paid; we have still got a home!" Then he turned round to wait patiently by Rachel for his turn for the coals. When the mistress of the shop came to serve the two children, she said, "Tell your mother I am thankful for her, I am sure;" and then reaching out her hand she took a rasher of bacon, laid it in a paper, and gave it to Sammy, saying, "Take that to

your mother — 'tis a relish for tea: her honest hands never owed me a penny! I shall sleep better to-night for knowing her own roof's over her."

Little Sammy ran home with his wood and his bacon, Rachel coming slowly after with the man carrying the coals. Then the widow's little room was all active life: there was lighting the fire, and setting the tea, and making all ready. Then little Sue climbed the stairs, welcomed by Sammy; and the blind man followed after, led in by his dog; and Sammy turned from his welcome to little Sue to lend his tiny hand to help in the blind man; and they all sat down together. Smut showed no signs of fear when Sharp led in his master, but sat quietly on, without ceasing the purr of satisfaction he was giving to the fire. It was in his rich days that Smut was a coward; he had grown brave in his poverty; and besides this, on further acquaintance, he had every reason to think highly of Sharp, so they met with mutual good-will; and however tempting the fire looked to Sharp, he did not intrude near Smut's place on the hearth, but lay down at his master's feet, and watched the flames as they flickered, and saw the little tea-kettle boil.

"Here's your chair, Uncle Benny — sit down," said Sammy, "and I'll tell you all about what a supper we have got. Sue and me are going each to have a basin of hot bread and milk. Mammy's crumbing the bread. Wont it be good, Uncle

Benny? And Rachel's toasting some bacon for mother and you — Mrs. Newson gave me that to bring home to mother. And good old Smut, he will have a whole saucer of milk! And there's such a dear fire! Don't you feel right hot, Uncle Benny, I say?"

"Yes, Sammy, I do; and the day has felt chill. I don't think 'twas the weather, though, but my vexing for you. Who could have thought we should all be sitting round here! Why, if anybody had told us, it would have seemed too good to believe! That's the way with our weak faith, — it can't trust to our God."

Benjamin Tovel had sat with his hands leaning on his stick, and his head stooped a little to catch the eager words of the boy; then, directing his to the widow, he said, "Oh, neighbor, 'When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them.'"

"It is so, indeed," replied the widow; "and I might say, 'He hath made the dry land springs of water,' in more senses than one. I am sure, if I had been asked the last person in the world that I could have expected to help one out of trouble, I should have said Mrs. Brame; for she never seemed to know what trouble meant. When my poor husband lay dying, she never set her foot in my door; and when she said hard words on that dear young

angel God sent to comfort him up with a blessed hope in his Saviour, I spoke out my mind; and when she left she never said one word of good-by. I remember I felt so bad about her that I took to praying for her, for she seemed almost like an enemy, so cold and so hard; and yet, to see how she came herself to-day, and, when she found out my trouble, poured out of her goodness, as if her whole heart were all comfort. How I did feel my hard thoughts of her, to see that she, too, was an angel sent by God to deliver!"

"Ah," said Benjamin Tovel, "that's how it will be in heaven; there will be one and another walking up there in light that we never knew here to be the children of our Father, and heirs of the kingdom he hath promised to them that love him."

So they talked on together, while waiting for tea to be ready. Sammy had got little Sue on the floor down by him, with Smut between them and the fire. "I say, Sue," whispered little Sammy, "Smut's as good as a raven!" Benjamin Tovel caught the words, for the ear of the blind man was quick, and he said, "That's a true word of the raven, Sammy. Smut is like the raven: God guides all his creatures as pleaseth him. You watch for his hand, Sammy; 'tis the Hand of your Father in heaven; and, babe as you are, his love will be revealed unto you. I can see that Hand in my blindness, as clear as they that have light. I am always looking for [redacted] and it supplies all my need."

"It was only to-day," said the widow, "I did feel tempted to think that good Hand had forsaken me. I had begged so hard to keep a home for the children the little while that I knew I might still have in this world. It seemed to me, as if to be parted from them while God gave me life could not be his will, and so I could not make it mine."

"'God is faithful,'" said Benjamin Tovel, "'and will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.'"

"Just in the last distressing hour
The Lord displays his saving power:
The mount of danger is the place
Where we shall see delivering grace."

"Let's we sing, daddy," said little Sue. The blind man's deep musical voice raised the tune, little Sue stood at his knee, and Sammy looked up from the floor, and they all sang together.

And now the tea could be made, and the milk, quickly boiled up, was poured on the bread; and little Sue said, "Don't it make you feel hungry, Sammy, to see how nice it do look?" and Sammy said, "I have been hungry all day, but I don't mind waiting now. Mammy, I want to give dear old Smut his nice milk." Smut was greatly surprised at a brimming saucer of milk, but after due considera-[illegible]e lapped it all up. Poor Sharp just lifted a

longing eye, but he did not speak a word; and little Sue left some of her bread and milk in her basin, and gave it to him, for she always shared her food with Sharp. And warmth, and comfort, and blessing cheered body and mind. Who could be happier that evening, or what better feast? The messenger of peace had come over the mountains of trouble, and by such blessed charity said to the poor, in brightening assurance, "Thy God reigneth!"

Little Sue went home with her father, and they rested in peace, in the happy knowledge that they were not bereft of their friends. Rachel and Sammy went warm and early to their pillow, little Sammy looking at his broom in the corner, and saying, "Be not you glad, mammy, I have got my own little broom safe? Will you put it into your letter when you write to her?" When the children were in bed the widow stepped out, bought her paper and pen and a penny bottle of ink, and came home and poured out her thankful heart to her friend, and then lay down with her children; and the sleep that had fled from her trouble came back to her joy, and the morning dawned in peace on the eyes of the widow.

Now to return to Mrs. Brame. So much had passed over her mind during her visit to Ivy Lane, that, on leaving the house where Widow Garson lodged, Mrs. Brame believed that the hour must be late. She hurried back to the main streets of

town, and on to the Golden Fleece, and found it still wanted an hour of the time fixed for departing. But feeling that her work for that day was done, and being a little exhausted with the effort of mind, she sat down in the Golden Fleece parlor, and did not refuse the biscuit and wine that the landlady pressed on her as an offering of respect. Seated there alone, Mrs. Brame had time to think over all that had passed. It seemed to her, on reflection, a large sum to have given the whole of two sovereigns on an impulse like that. Her store was less by two pounds, and she had nothing in hand to show for it; a gap in her reckonings she could never fill up, her gathered store would always stand at those two sovereigns the less. These calculations were natural to one unused to give. But it had not been by a sudden impulse only that Mrs. Brame had at length stretched forth her hands to the poor and needy. A new and heavenly principle was strengthening within her. From that hour when with tears of deep feeling she acknowledged "there is no good in me," — from that hour the love of the Spirit of God had taken root and blossomed within her, and already bore this blessed fruit. For the tree of immortal life has not one season alone; it bears its fruit every month, and the leaves of that tree are for the healing of the nations. This is equally true of it, whether growing in the Paradise of God, or planted here in the renewed soul of man, the garden of the Lord, bearing

the fruits of the Spirit, "which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Mrs. Brame, therefore, was not left to sink into the questioning of her former self; for when the love of the Spirit has found life in action, the Spirit of love is always near to speak peace. And so amidst the first reaction of feeling, as she sat alone in the parlor of the Golden Fleece, she heard again, in remembrance, the low tones of the widow, saying, "My God hath sent his angel and hath shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me." Had God indeed sent her, made her his messenger? What, thought Mrs. Brame, sent me the very moment in which my hard heart was shown me? Can I believe it? Yes, you may truly believe it; for while it is written, "God resisteth the proud," it is also written, "He giveth grace to the humble." You have humbled yourself under the mighty hand of God, and he has already exalted you into his special service, to be his messenger of life and blessing to the poor of his people. Wonder not at this with unbelieving doubt, for he waiteth to be gracious and upbraideth not.

Mrs. Brame could not share the deep maternal feelings of the poor widowed mother, yet not the less was the workhouse a lion's mouth to her. She held it to be the end of all respectable independence; and though not quite right in this feeling, yet, as it was

her feeling, it made the poor widow's expression a very real one to her.

Then again Mrs. Brame recollected how that morning she had gone to her chest in the last moment of time and taken out those two sovereigns; she could not tell why, and all so unlike her prudent ways, who never did a thing without a reason. So she came to the conclusion that it must have been as the poor woman said, God had been pleased to send her; this was a hallowed and elevating feeling, shedding assurance within and serenity without. Even though, it must be confessed, there did rise in Mrs. Brame's mind something of a secret fear lest she should be sent often on such errands as these, and her carefully gathered store be melted away. Let it not surprise any that such a feeling should be there; self will contend for the dominion it has reckoned its own, and many a battle-field must be fought before the "more than conqueror through Him that loved us."

But William was ready, and Black Beauty trotted home in the calm autumn afternoon with his master and Mrs. Brame and the two little mice. On reaching the Hall, Mrs. Brame carried up the little house and the mice within it, secret and safe under her shawl, into her own room. Tea was ready, and she hastened down to the housekeeper's room, much in need of its welcome refreshment. Mrs. Brame now seemed to share in little Alfred's personal feeling,

and wished to impart her secret to no one but Mercy. After tea she asked Mercy to step up with her; then alone in her room the first exhibition took place. All was well with the little mice, and they both looked more engaging than Mrs. Brame had thought it possible little mice could appear. Mercy was delighted, and not shocked at the cost, nor surprised at the extravagance. She offered to run to the nursery to see whether the children were there, and begged that she might be present when the mice made their appearance. Mercy soon returned, saying the children were there, and not the least expecting any surprise as at hand. So Mrs. Brame accompanied Mercy, whose eager step and brightening eye told almost of a childlike expectation and joy. It was a singular, yet now a natural and happy connection, this threefold companionship in the way to the nursery — Mrs. Brame, Mercy, and the two little mice. A little mouse had been the means of making peace, and now the elder and the younger were bearing two little mice in triumph, the unconscious token of their mutual good-will. So quickly may the greatest changes be wrought when the hidden agency is that of omnipotent love.

Mercy opened the door just as Constance was saying, "Cox, will you tell us a story? We don't want to play."

"You must wait a little while," replied Betty Cox; "and try and manage one game more. But who is coming here?"

The children looked round, and ran to meet Mrs. Brame and Mercy at the door.

Mrs. Brame walked in with a settled composure, and a small bundle cuddled up under her arm, Mercy attending on her with a face full of significant pleasure.

"Who can guess what is here?" said Mrs. Brame, invitingly. Mrs. Brame's imagination had brightened up with her affections, as probably it always does, and she now had a perception of the possible use of a guess.

The children gave a jump of delight, and reached up little hands, but Mrs. Brame's arm was above them.

"What can it be?" said Mrs. Cox, and she came into the group where the children were jumping in eager delight, now catching hold of Mercy, now of Mrs. Brame. But all leaps were in vain. Sally Millington stood behind, holding little Maud in her arms, but no survey could avail; only little Maud, discovering nothing except Mrs. Brame, said, gravely, "'Mut, 'Mut!" At this Sally Millington took a dance with her, always supposing it as yet the best remedy for care.

"Who can guess?" again asked Mrs. Brame, in the same knowing way.

"Brame, Brame, let me whisper," said Alfred, and he ran for a chair, upon which he climbed to whisper. "Is it my own little live mouse?"

Then Mrs. Brame unfolded some wraps and opened a little lid, with Alfred still on the chair, that he might have the first peep; then, as he jumped down in his glee, she seated herself, and all gathered eagerly round. Oh, the shouts when the brown mouse and the white mouse appeared! Mrs. Brame proposed they should feed on the table, and Mrs. Cox in a moment cleared away all her work, the cutting-out so important to finish. Little Maud, for the first time, came to climb on Brame's knee, and the little brown mouse and the white nibbled a nut on the table, then took a little run, and turned back again. Alfred's glee was extreme. "Oh, call grandmamma! Mercy, call grandmamma!" Mercy hastened off, but Alfred could not wait; he ran out calling through the balustrades "Papa, mamma, come up here!" The shout was so eager, and repeated again, that before Mercy could accomplish her errand, doors opened on all sides. Mr. Clifford looked up from the library, Lady Gertrude from the drawing-room, and grandmamma came in view to answer the appeal. Little Alfred ran for a chair to set her close to the mice; then, unwilling to leave them again, he called from the table until papa, mamma, and people great and small, came hastening into the nursery, to see what the occasion might be. Mrs. Brame was well-nigh overcome at little Alfred's delight and the interest of all. And when Mr. Clifford knelt down by Alfred, and laid a nut on

the open palm of his hand, and first the little brown mouse ventured on, then the white, and both sat nibbling together, shouts arose from the young voices around.

Never before in the annals of time had two little mice caused such an uproar of pleasure, nor engaged so many people in interest around them. There was no dispersing of the assembly until the two little mice had both retired to their house. Mercy was engaged trying some dozen probable places, as a safe resting-place for the house of the mice; while Mrs. Brame talked with Mrs. Cox, and, in a confidential whisper, said, "I have found poor old Smut! I will tell the children another day." Alfred finally fixed on a little rest above his cot, where some friend had placed a cherub in plaster of Paris, which he now dislodged to make a rest for his two little mice.

CHAPTER VII.

THAT evening Mrs. Brame could not resist the inclination to open her chest and look at her golden store. It was less, she knew, by two sovereigns, and she had an unacknowledged wish to see whether it looked less. She opened her chest, drew out its secret drawer; there lay her sovereigns, many of them as bright as when fresh from the mint, never having known the traffic of trade or of charity. She looked on her gold. There was danger in that look, for it was a look of love for money as money, not because of the blessings it might scatter around. The question seemed still undecided whether Mrs. Brame was to be of "the covetous," whom, it is written, "the Lord abhorreth;" or whether hers was to be "the soul of the liberal," whom God will make rich. Mrs. Brame began again to ponder on the impulse of that day, which had led her to take in and give away two sovereigns in one act; to ponder on this, not thinking of the widow and the fatherless, but looking on her money. Then it was that a still small voice spoke in Mrs. Brame's heart, and said, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich." Those wondrous words, pleading with the worldly self in her soul, severed once and forever the link that had bound her to money; it melted away under the warmth of that heavenly love, and Mrs. Brame never again cared for money as money. Even now she put out her hand and took another bright sovereign from her store, and placed it in her purse, that no call might find her unready; then lay down to rest in the happy consciousness that the widow and the fatherless still had a home.

That first evening, when attending on her lady, the time had been occupied in talking over the mice and little Alfred's pleasure, and things naturally flowing from the comfort felt by all. But the next evening Mrs. Brame told of her visit to Ivy Lane, and of the state in which she found the poor widow and her children. Lady Gertrude listened with the deepest attention. It was the first time she had ever heard of the wants and sorrows of others from her old nurse, and this newly-awakened spring of feeling was the cause of warmest thankfulness to her.

Mrs. Brame had said nothing of what she had done, nor had she mentioned the arrival of the bailiff; she only told of the state of distress in which she had found them, and of the poor woman's dread of the workhouse; and Lady Gertrude asked anx-

iously, — "But the workhouse! I hope they are not gone there?"

"No," replied Mrs. Brame, "they will not go awhile yet, for the bailiff came while I was there, and I could not stand that, so I sent him away."

"You mean you paid the rent?" said Lady Gertrude.

"Well, he would not have gone without," replied Mrs. Brame.

"What a mercy you went in that day! But what can be done for the future?"

"Pay the poor widow's rent, I suppose," replied Mrs. Brame; "I fear it will not be wanted long; her days cannot be many."

"O Brame! you stood in the breach like an angel of comfort! How often you will think over with thankfulness the balm you must have poured into that widowed heart! I will talk with my husband, and hear what he thinks can best be done."

Mrs. Brame had not told the Lady Gertrude the words of the widow when she said, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." But now her own beloved lady, the one being in all the world who had known her longest and best, who knew, more than any other, all her faults, and her crossness, and her hard ways, she had called her "an angel of comfort;" and Mrs. Brame thought over the words, "an angel." My lady call me 'an angel!' I

thought she did know all the bad ways I have nursed up so long, and only bore with me because I was faithful to her. Could she indeed think God had sent me?" And over her spirit came again the awful sweetness of the thought of being so near unto God as to be directed and sent by him; and there rose in her soul the longing to be near him at all times; "in all her ways to acknowledge him, that he might direct her paths."

On the following Sunday, when the text was given out at church, Mrs. Brame looked up with a sudden surprise, for the words were from Ps. cxlviii. 14, "A people near unto Him." These words would not have struck on her ear more than any others before, but she had been led to feel a little of what it really was to be near unto God; she had longed for greater nearness, — a constant nearness to him, and this made her notice the words.

The minister unfolded his subject by showing that to be near unto God, we must be made like unto him in the spirit of our mind, — the same mind must be in us that was in Christ Jesus our Lord; for how can two walk together except they be agreed? Then he went on to show what the mind was that was in Jesus Christ: his meekness and lowliness, his poverty of spirit, — he humbled himself; his love passing knowledge, — in that he died for the ungodly; his will subdued in all things to God — "not my will, but thine." As he dwelt on all these points,

Mrs. Brame listened, and each one seemed more unlike her than all that went before. "The entrance of thy word giveth light." The word of God entered her heart now, and was shedding light around, showing her more and more of the evil of sin, and the alienation of her soul from God. Over many a listener there, the calm words of the preacher were passing almost unheeded; but in Mrs. Brame's soul they kindled a true repentance, — grief of heart for having been, in her spirit and life, in opposition to Him who deserved the deepest love and ceaseless service of all. She looked on him whom she had pierced, and mourned for him. No one can say, in true repentance, "I have sinned," until the heart is ready also to say, "I will arise and go to my Father."

Early in the week, Mrs. Brame paid a visit to the nursery, where she was always welcome now, and told the story of the discovery of Smut. She observed how great an interest Constance and Alfred took in the history of the poor widow and her children, about to be sent from their home by the man who had come to sell all their things; and especially in the little sweeper boy and his broom. A short silence followed at the end of her tale; then Constance said, "Did you really send the man away?" as wishing to be quite assured, and little Alfred asked, "Did he mind what you said, and go quite away?"

"Yes, quite away," replied Mrs. Brame.

"Will he never come again?" asked Constance.

"I hope not," said Mrs. Brame: "I don't think your papa will let him."

"Papa said I must take care of all good women," said Alfred; "I will just go and ask him. Cox, may I go now?"

"And I too?" said Constance.

"May too?" said little Maud, who always called herself "May;" and she was, in her home, like a fair blossom of spring.

"The nursery bell has not rung yet," replied Cox, "but it will not be long now."

"I hear it!" cried Alfred; and Constance ran with him, little Maud hastening after, in Sally Millington's arms.

They all descended in quick time, and the children were soon round their father.

"Papa!" said Alfred. "Papa!" said Constance.

"One voice at a time; which should speak first, Alfy?" asked their papa.

"Consy, papa; but I, too, very soon."

"Well, Consy, what is it?"

"O papa, Brame has been to see her old home, and she found a poor woman and two little children; and a man came to sell their things, and send them away without any home, papa, because they had no father to take care of them; and Brame sent him quite away, and the poor woman was so glad, and

the little boy had a little broom to sweep the street-crossing clean; and, papa, Brame said you would not let the man come again to take the poor woman's home away; will you, papa?"

"Now, what has Alfy to say?" inquired their father.

"But, papa," pleaded Constance, "do just tell me, will you never let that poor woman's home be taken away?"

As the child pleaded, the thought of old Willie, and his own beloved father, and the days of his childhood, came back on Herbert Clifford's heart, and his eyes filled with the tears of tenderest recollection as he still said, "Let me hear, before I answer, what Alfy has to say."

"Papa, I can take care of that poor woman, and I can go and tell the man he must never go there again. I can ride there to-morrow on Snowberry, and you can go, too, papa."

"But, Alfy, the poor woman has to pay money for her home; the man was obliged to come because he wanted the money, and when he came the poor woman had no money to give him!"

"Then, papa, I will give her my money; I don't want any money. If I give her all mine, will that be enough?"

"I am afraid not, Alfy."

"Then, I know grandmamma will give her some, too. Will you, grandmamma? Do tell papa you

will. How many pennies does she want, papa?" Alfred as yet called all coins by the one name of "penny," and thought the larger the coin the more value it had.

"I shall count mine," said Alfred.

"And I too," said Constance; "and I will ask Cox, for I know she has a great many."

Then there was a running off for little boxes, and a pouring out on the table, and Constance came back with delight; Cox had given all her pennies, and a big silver one, too; and grandmamma took out her purse, and gave it to Alfred to choose which piece of money he liked. Alfred rejected the gold, and fixed on a bright half-crown, as the largest in value, and the one he wished to have.

"Will that do, papa?" said Alfy. "Shall I take it all to the man, and tell him never to go there any more?"

"You had better ask mamma what she would advise." On which the children ran to their mother, who suggested that as Brame knew the man and the poor woman, they had better drive in with her in the pony-carriage, and see what could be done."

"Shall we go to-morrow, mamma?"

"Yes, if the weather be fine."

"May I run and tell Brame?" Alfred asked in delight; and, receiving permission, he ran off to his friend, while little Maud, looking up, said "'Mut, 'Mut!"

"What is it Maud wants?" inquired her mother; but little Maud only repeated, "'Mut, 'Mut!"

"Never mind, mamma," said Constance; "Maud only means Smut."

"What is Smut?" asked her mother.

"Only a cat," replied Constance. "Brame had a great cat, and she called him Smut, and one day a dog came in, and he ran up the chimney, and never could be heard of any more, only the other day Brame found him quite well and alive; and this poor woman and her little children had taken care of him and fed him. But do you know, mamma, a young lady brought a beautiful little kitten, with a little red collar on, but Brame would not have it, and the young lady almost cried."

"Why did this young lady wish Brame to have it?"

"Because, you see, mamma, the dog came with her that frightened Brame's cat away; but it was not her dog, only it followed her for a bone; it was a poor man's dog, who was blind!"

"Then Smut is not in the chimney now?" said Mr. Clifford.

"No, papa, he is quite well, and lives with the poor woman, and he would not leave her little girl when she cried; but Smut had quite forgotten Brame, which was very ungrateful. Mamma, don't you think it was rather unkind of Brame not to take the little kitten when the young lady wanted her so much to have it?"

"I cannot tell, Consy, but I am sure, if it were at all unkind, Brame is sorry for it now; and when people are sorry for any want of kindness we should never mention it again, — should we?"

"No, mamma; I am sure Brame is very kind now."

It was soon decided that Constance and Alfred were to go into the town with Mrs. Brame the next day to visit the poor woman, and to tell her she should receive one pound a quarter, which, with her small parish allowance, would keep her and her children at home. Constance and Alfred were each to have their own little purse, with some pieces of money in, to lay out on their way in whatever Mrs. Brame thought would be best for the poor woman and her children. All were happy in this arrangement, the children delighted; even the two little mice felt the benefit, in a little more quiet and a longer nap by day, than they had had since they quitted their four-footed friends. The children rose up with happy thoughts of their mission of love on a bright autumnal morning. They looked from their nursery-window on to the soft misty uplands, and into the blue of the sky. "Oh, Cox, we shall go! we shall go!" happy voices exclaimed. Never did pleasure to the children look greater than this visit with Brame to buy treasures in the town for the widow and her children, and secure to them the possession of the attic they called home. And it was

home to them, — warmed with the love of a mother, happy because her presence was there — the smile, the voice, the hand, the step of a mother! There they slept undisturbed, and when the sunshine streamed through the ivy-leaves, it called them to prayer. There they prayed to their Father in heaven, sang their soft hymn of praise, and read together of the love that created them, redeemed them, watched over them, and would one day receive them to itself forever. It was home, for no other authority was there save the sweet word of a mother. Not the eye of workhouse inspection, only a mother's, filled with tenderness and tears. No master's step entered to order to this task or that; the mother toiled on for her children, and the impulse that strengthened into principle in the heart of each child was the dear thought of mother and home! It was this home Mrs. Brame had saved on that day; this home that little Constance and Alfred were going in to defend from the remorseless footstep of want. And such homes are countless in these dear isles of the sea, and numbers not, as this, bereft of the husband and father. God guard them in safety, and send his own ministering children to and fro through the land to keep their hallowed ties unbroken!

The lessons were done, the early dinner over, and the pony-chaise at the door; it was no longer drawn by Snowflake and Ruby, but by a black pony, of

great beauty, whose name was Zarepha. Snowflake and Ruby had ended their pleasant work, and they both lay at rest under the old trees of the park. Constance and Alfred sat together in front by the groom, and Mrs. Brame in full view of the children behind. But the chief interest of the drive was now to ask questions about little Sammy and his broom, and his sister and poor widowed mother; and the little faces were always turning round in eager inquiry.

"Shall we see the young lady and that beautiful little kitten?" asked Constance, rather doubtfully, not quite sure that it was right to remind Brame of an event of which she had spoken with self-condemnation.

"I am afraid not," said Brame; "she is away with her father; he is blind, and she has no mother." And Mrs. Brame's cheerful look changed to one grave, if not sad.

"What made her father blind?" asked little Alfred.

"India, they say," replied Mrs. Brame. "It is very hot there, and bad diseases, I suppose; but I don't know any more."

"Do you think she has left the little kitten at home?" inquired Constance.

"My dear, the kitten, if alive, has been a cat long ago! but Smut will be there, and he is a beauty, I am sure."

Mrs. Brame felt an interest in taking the children

to a shop to which she gave her custom when she lived in Ivy Lane. It was not the shop where the poor widow dealt, kept by the kind woman who gave the rasher of bacon when little Sammy told her that the rent was all paid; that was a small general shop, and the one where Mrs. Brame dealt was a large one. "Maynard, Linen Draper and Grocer," was over the door. Zarepha drew them swiftly there, and Mr. Maynard came out, and the three important customers entered the shop. Constance and Alfred had very seldom been in a shop, and never in one like Mr. Maynard's before. On one side were all descriptions of grocery, such as coffee, sugar, and tea; at the end of the shop, bacon, butter, and cheese; and down the other long side all that linen-drapers sell, with a counter for stationery, and a small room for bonnets, and all that belongs to a milliner's department. It was a very pleasant shop to stand in, looking round, purse in hand, with all the wants of the widow and the fatherless pressing warm round the heart. Constance had a great wish to fix her choice on a print strewn with rosebuds, to make little Rachel a frock, and a little plaid pinafore for Sammy. But she was at length persuaded by Mrs. Brame, as winter was fast coming on, to lay out her money in flannel and stockings. These were not so attractive to Constance, and as she never knew what it was to feel bitterly cold, she could not understand how they could be so welcome

as the rosebuds and plaid. But she took Mrs. Brame's counsel, and purchased the warm flannel and stockings, and Rachel and little Sammy were happier all the cold winter, and their poor mother coughed less often for the warm clothing Constance gave.

Alfred wished to buy some food for Sammy, and fixed his attention on a small round Dutch cheese. Mrs. Brame indulged his wish to buy it, for she said Dutch cheese was wholesome, and then proposed tea and sugar, and, lifting Alfred into a high chair, told him he could ask the man in a white apron for half-a-pound of tea.

The man presented himself before Mrs. Brame.

"It is Master Clifford who is come to buy to-day," said Mrs. Brame; and the man turned to Alfred, and said, —

"What may I have the pleasure to serve you with, sir?"

Alfred looked at Mrs. Brame, and said, —

"A half-penny of tea."

"Half-a-pound," whispered Mrs. Brame, but Alfred knew no difference, and the white-aproned man derstood perfectly well, and little Alfred watched th great interest the ladling out of his tea into the le lined with white paper, then its tying up in e. Dear child! he little knew then, nor ever will is wealth, the comfort that lies folded in a packet ea: the one beverage in the cottage, refreshing

body and mind. All the associations with it are comfort — the kettle, the tea-pot, the cup and saucer, the short rest from toil, the reviving fragrance and warmth. Yet how often it is longed for in vain, because no Mrs. Brame has discovered the want, no Constance and Alfred made haste to supply it! Then the man in the white apron waited further commands, and Alfred, instructed by Mrs. Brame, gave his order for sugar. After buying all this, to Alfred's surprise, three pennies were returned to him by the white-aproned man; he looked up at Mrs. Brame in doubt and suspense, but Mrs. Brame told him he might put them in his purse. As they were leaving the shop Constance looked again at the pretty prints in display, saying, —

"I do wish so I had just one little frock!"

"Do you, dear?" said Mrs. Brame, and she turned again to the counter and helped Constance to choose, not the rosebuds on a white ground, but little stars of white on a dark lilac print. Mrs. Brame paid for this, and Constance, quite happy, left Mrs. Brame to be the bearer of the clothing for warmth, and clasped up in her arms the little star-bestrewn frock. So at length they left the shop, laden with comfort, and Zarepha drew them quickly to the midst of Ivy Lane, and each carrying a parcel they went in at the door.

The sight of a pony-carriage at that door was unusual, the visitors attracted attention especially

within; one lodger and another looked out after them as they climbed the long stair-case. When it was seen to be Mrs. Brame, it was guessed where they were going, for it had been soon discovered in the house that Mrs. Brame had paid the poor widow's rent, and one and another looked out in curiosity and interest. The lodgers had been good to the widow and her children; if it had not been for them the last parting would have been over before Mrs. Brame had revisited the house. The poor are good to the poor, and will generously help those in greater need than themselves. How often in their ready help in trouble may be found the answer to our Lord's touching inquiry, "Which thinkest thou was neighbor to him?" And they lend their aid with tired limbs, weary with the toil of the day, and give of their daily bread when they know not how it may come on the morrow. Well may we bind the injunction of our Lord on our hearts, "Go thou and do likewise."

It was only the poor woman, who lodged in the room that had been Mrs. Brame's, who looked out with a feeling of jealous displeasure. "There," she said to herself, "all the charity goes up to the attic, because the widow's children have nursed up the cat! such favor and fuss about cats I never heard before." But Mrs. Brame was climbing the steep staircase without one thought of Smut; for God's children had taken the place of God's creatures in

her heart. But there was no one to tell the poor woman her mistake, for no one knew her thoughts — only He who understandeth our thought afar off; and he was not angry, but pitied the poor woman; for she had been trained up in hard thoughts from a child, and no one had ever to know, by happy experience, the love that seeketh not its own.

Mrs. Brame, Constance, and Alfred, at length climbed to the door. Mrs. Brame knocked, and a child came to open.

"Mother, 'tis the lady come again!" said Rachel, turning back to her mother, in her glad surprise, without asking Mrs. Brame in. But Mrs. Brame entered with the children beside her. The widow rose from the chair, and her pale face flushed with deep feeling. The room looked neat as before; but a light of life and comfort was over it. A little fire burned in the grate, the tea was set on the table, — though not yet four o'clock, and the kettle sang its low song, the cadence of comfort that often cheers up the lonely. The widow's chair was near the table, and she held in her hand the shirt she was making for sale at a shop. Rachel, too, was making a shirt, and a little rough stool by the fire looked as if waiting for Sammy. Smut sat before the fender with eyes shut, as if thinking, but not less aware of all passing around. "There is Smut, Alfy!" whispered Constance; and the widow had set the only other chair in the room for Mrs. Brame, and Rachel the stools for Constance and Alfred.

Then followed a time whose tale cannot be told. The one pound to be given a quarter, and the first given now; the parcels opened by Constance and Alfred, who looked grave and surprised at the warm tears that fell on the treasures unfolded to that widowed mother's eyes, especially when Rachel cried too, which Rachel would not then have done if it had not been that when she saw her mother cry, she always cried too. But Mrs. Brame made rather short work of the gifts. Then came the caress for Smut from Constance and Alfred; Smut did not respond to it, — not that any sharp claws appeared, but he glided away, and walked round and round Mrs. Brame, rubbing his face on her gown, as if recollection returned; and Mrs. Brame said that was just what he used to do, and she stroked him once; but she had deeper interests at heart, and Smut held no absorbing place now. Indeed, Mrs. Brame could seldom think of Smut without a feeling of self-condemnation, as she remembered the years in which she wasted life on herself and on him.

There is a truth some have found it a long task to learn, that God has given us our affections for our own welfare and the welfare of others; and if we shut them up to this or that object, neglectful of others, our hearts will grow narrower, and our life will lose thousands of blessings that it might have received itself, and scattered abroad. Each new friendship or interest, if entertained aright, will in-

crease our power of influence, and expand our affections for others; but if, instead of this, we allow it to absorb us, we shall find our error too late, and look back on lost and wasted feelings, that, if directed aright, as God willed when he gave them, would yield blessed memories to gladden the evening of this life, and impart a deeper joy to the next. With Mrs. Brame, it had not been a friend; it was her sole companion, — a cat. But Mrs. Brame's heart had been opened, and its interest was ready for all. During this visit, she inquired about Miss Cambell, the young lady who had proved so good a friend to the widow Garson. The poor widow slipped her hand in her bosom, and took out a letter. She said it had only come that morning. Would Mrs. Brame please to read it? It was as follows: —

"DEAR MRS. GARSON, — I have been shedding tears of joy over your letter. No words can tell you the comfort it gave me. I received it last evening, and the thinking of it kept me wakeful for hours. How little I thought, when I vexed so long for that dear old cat, what comfort would one day come out of that sad beginning! I had thought of you continually, and almost dreaded to hear, fearing that terrible sorrow must have come down upon you; but, as Benjamin Tovel would say, 'Where is our faith?' How thankful he must be, and little Sue, and your dear children! Give my love to

them all, and tell them I shall come home soon, rejoicing. I seem to feel sure Mrs. Brame will not forget you now. I think she is one who, if once made a friend, will always prove so. I often long to see you all again. We have not much comfort here, but my dear father feels better. In thankfulness and joy, I remain, yours affectionately,

"OLIVIA CAMBELL."

Mrs. Brame felt warmed by the letter; it was to her a balm on the past to find that any kind thought of her could be entertained by the blind officer's child. But she returned the letter without any comment upon it, not quite knowing what to say. She did not make any inquiry as to Benjamin Tovel and little Sue, who were mentioned in the letter, not remembering that that was the blind basket-maker's name, and therefore not supposing they were persons in whom it concerned her to feel any interest. Then little Alfred whispered to Mrs. Brame, —

"Where is Sammy?" and Mrs. Brame asked the widow.

"He is not home yet," she replied. "He can hardly be got from his crossing until he has earned a few pence. He often says, 'Mammy, I am man enough to work for you; and when I grow a big man I will earn all you want.'" And the widow's face saddened a moment, as the thought crossed her heart that her life could not linger on earth to see Sammy a man.

"Is Sammy sweeping his crossing?" little Alfred asked again of Mrs. Brame, not having courage to ask of the widow, but she replied, —

"Yes, my dear young sir, he is there. I wish he were home; but this being a fine day, I fear he has not earned a half penny, though people are very good to him, and I daresay he is staying on in hope that he may. We get our tea early, because we take but two meals a-day; and he knows we always wait for him. Shall Rachel run and tell him to make haste and get home?"

"I think," said Mrs. Brame, "we might drive home by his crossing, if it is not far away."

"No, ma'am, it 's very near; just the end of the next street, on the way to the market."

This return by the crossing was a happy thought of Mrs. Brame's, and with smiles and farewells the children departed. They had not driven far before they saw a place where two crossings met, and there stood a little boy with a broom in his hand. It was Sammy, the little Ministering Boy.

"There he is! — there is little Sammy, and look, there is his broom!" both children exclaimed.

"Should you like to give him your pennies?" Mrs. Brame asked of Alfred.

"Yes," answered Alfred, and he pulled out his purse. "Now, stop, John," little Alfred said to the groom, "I want to get out."

"What for?" asked Mrs. Brame; "you can give your pennies without getting out."

But Alfred replied, — "No, I cannot. Sammy is not a beggar!" And John drew up Zarepha, and Alfred walked straight over the clean crossing, and then put his three pennies into little Sammy's hand, exactly as Mrs. Brame had told him people did when he questioned her all about little Sammy and his broom. Alfred looked upon Sammy's as a respectable trade, to be dealt with accordingly; then, satisfied, he climbed up into the carriage again, and Zarepha drew them quickly away. Little Sammy had been too much astonished to speak. No one had ever put a larger sum than a penny into his hand before, and when the children turned round they saw him looking after them; then, lifting his little broom, he set off running home.

"He is going to his mother!" said Constance.

"Will my pennies make him quite happy?" asked Alfred of Mrs. Brame, who assured him they would. And the ministering children were soon safe in their home. And their evening was bright as their day had been, while they poured out their tales of joy to the listening love around them. And so closed that day of blessing, leaving happy memories forever.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Mrs. Brame was returning from the town on the market-day on which she went in with William Smith, she had suddenly said, "There is one thing now I have forgotten; I did mean to inquire after the blind man who makes baskets for sale."

"Did you want one of his baskets?" inquired William; "I could get you one next week if you tell me where he lives."

"Oh, no, thank you, it was not that I wanted any baskets; I merely meant to ask for the man; he lives, or did live, in Ivy Lane. I have seen him at work when I chanced to go by the lower end of the Lane; but it is not of the least consequence, for I know nothing of the man."

It happened that, two or three weeks after this, Mrs. Smith said one day, "I cannot tell when we have ever been so long without any trampers selling baskets this way. I begin to wish they would come, for my market-baskets wont hold together much longer."

"Well, now you speak of it," said William. "I

should not wonder but what I can please you, as well as the travelling folk could. Mrs. Brame was telling me the day I drove her in, of a blind man in town who makes baskets. I always have a fancy for the basket of the blind; I think it stands better than that by those who can see."

"That's likely," said Mrs. Smith, "their minds are more settled to one thing at a time; but with half the folk now-a-days, the mind wanders after the eyes, and you may look long enough before you will see them do a thing well; 't is the ruin of service, and will be of trade. Dear me, in my mother's time, look how long the things wore! and now you may reckon them as old almost when you buy them for new, setting the one wear against the other."

"Never mind, mother, I will see what my blind man can do."

"Ah, lad, 'tis no use your saying 'never mind,' in that quiet way; I do mind, and I say we ought to mind, to see them do the work better who have lost the good gift of sight. What, I say, were eyes for, but to mind the work you have in hand? not to go roaming away as if they did not belong to you. I do say the blind put the seeing wholly to shame."

"But, mother, I could not draw my straight furrow if my eyes were dark, and you know how often you have said, 'If you hold your course in life Will, as straight as your furrow, you may humbly thank God for his grace at the end.'"

"Ah, that's a sure thing, Will. I am thankful to God that each one of my children has the blessing of sight."

So William waited for the market-day to see what the blind man's baskets might be. Mrs. Brame had not thought of the blind man again. It was not now the want of kind feeling in her, but she did not think much of facts that she did not actually see. The imagination is the eye of the mind, it enables us when we hear of things to picture them at once. When you tell one who has a vivid imagination, of a poor blind man making baskets for a living, they see at once the poor blind man's condition. They see him working in darkness, doing all things by touch, never cheered by one cheerful ray, never seeing how well his work looks when it is done; then selling it to some one whom he cannot see, — cannot read in their faces whether they are pleased with his work; stepping out to buy what he wants, but not seeing what he buys, and then sitting down in darkness to eat the bread he has earned. All this, imagination shows at once; but a person who has not much imagination hears of a blind basket-maker, and perhaps only thinks, like Mrs. Brame, "A good thing for him that he has learned a trade!" And this is quite true, only this is not all the truth; the blind want our sympathy, for sympathy is one form of love. Yet we ought to remember that if God has given us a power of imagination, it is a gift from him,

and we must answer to him for our use of it; we must try to keep it real and true, pure and holy, not yielding to "vain imaginations;" and it ought to make us very careful to guard the feelings of others, because, if we have imagination, we are able to understand the feelings of others, or ought to be able, far better than those who have not. We must not, therefore, think people wanting in kindness when they do not always feel as we expected they would. It was so with Mrs. Brame; she only thought of a blind man as getting his living by basket-work,—a happy thing that he could; and keeping a dog twice the size that he could possibly want, which was not to his credit.

How different the true picture of Benjamin Tovel! He had once been a prosperous man, in one of the happiest of the cottage homes of England; but the ravages of fever had left that home desolate. His young wife, Susan, sickened under it, and she and her baby-boy were both laid in one grave. Benjamin Tovel struggled long with the fatal disease; he recovered life, but his eyesight was gone; he could not see the dear places left vacant by the wife and the child,—he could only feel all joy was darkened for him, the mirth of the land gone. His other child, little Sue, had been thought hopelessly ill, but she was spared to him a while, though her frail little form would have warned her father, could he have looked on his child, that she was only given back for a time, not to find her home long on earth.

The dark wing of the pestilence had indeed left its shadow over Benjamin Tovel; but there is a light that no darkness can dim, and this brightened for him the gloom of earth's sorrows with the smile of a Father in heaven. Those who mourn for them that sleep in Jesus, sorrow not without hope, and Benjamin Tovel looked to a glad meeting again with his young wife and babe; but now for a time his pathway lay through deep affliction. He was sent to a hospital, and little Sue, just recovering from fever, to the workhouse infirmary. It was found that no aid could be rendered to the poor man's lost sight, — it was hopelessly gone. So they sent him to learn with the blind the trade of basket-work, that he might have a means of support. It took months to learn his trade well, and during this time his one earthly thought was his child, little Sue. He gave the greatest care and attention in learning the trade, for he felt that each day he could lessen the time would hasten his child's release from the workhouse, and her restoration to him. It proved a rough nursery for the little cottage girl; but we need not write of this, for when kind hearts rule in the workhouse it is a house of blessing to many.

The time came at length when Benjamin Tovel had mastered his trade. Then he left the infirmary for the blind, with a thankfulness he could not express for the knowledge he had gained there, enabling him to maintain himself and his child. He

clasped little Sue again in a father's embrace; he could not see her sweet face, but he could feel her form, and the sound of her voice brought back to him the dear tones of her mother. Benjamin Tovel heard of a little shop to let at a low rent in Ivy Lane, and there he went at once and made it a home. But Benjamin Tovel and little Sue had a companion quite ready to share with them all the changes of life. This was a large dog, by name Sharp. Esau Tovel, Benjamin Tovel's father, was a shepherd on the Wiltshire Downs, and when his son took a farm-laborer's place in another county. he had charge of his master's sheep. Esau Tovel had paid his son only two visits, — journeys not being so frequent in those days, — the first was at his son's marriage with Susan Wellan, a wife fitted to make and keep a husband's home happy; and the second visit was when little Sue was two years old. On this second visit he brought with him a young dog, the descendant of one who had long been his own faithful companion; and pleased at seeing the friendship quickly made between it and little Sue, her grandfather said it must be called little Sue's dog. The dog's name was Sharp. Esau Tovel did not long survive this second visit, and the affections of the cottage family gathered strongly round the dog. Sharp was not of the breed of shepherds' dogs, but gifted with that peculiar sagacity that made him easily trained to the work.

The sagacity of the dog soon became known in the neighborhood; many offers of a high price were made, but Benjamin Tovel always said, "The dog is my little Sue's, — my old father's gift to her; he brought him up from his birth, and as long as I have bread to give my wife and children, and a shelter to cover them, I will not sell him."

But the time came when neither bread nor shelter remained; houseless, weakly, and blind, with his only child in the workhouse, Benjamin Tovel might have felt compelled to sell the dog, though it would have been to him like the poor man compelled to part with the one little ewe lamb which he had nourished up, which grew up together with him and his children, which did eat of his meat and drank of his cup, and was to him as a daughter. But it was in this hour of his need that his master came to him, and said, "Now, Ben, don't be vexing any way about the dog; I will make him a home while you are without one. If they can help your sight, why you may keep my sheep again; and, if not, you may be as glad of him in other ways then. So I will see to his safety, and there will be time enough to settle what is best in the end!" This was the truest charity, of more worth than silver or gold. It helped to revive the sick man; he well knew his master's favor for the dog, — that he would have given much to possess him, yet he said not a word of buying him then! For he was a man of generous nature; he

knew his poor shepherd could not easily stand out then against selling the dog, so he waited until Benjamin Tovel should be, as it were, a free man again, able to keep or part with the dog without constraint; or, at all events, he waited to see if this might yet be. The time did come when Benjamin Tovel could again keep a home, small and poor though it was, and he more than ever wanted his faithful dog, as a guard and a guide.

Time had passed on; little Sue was just seven years old, but so small and slight, she was always called little Sue. The father, the child, and the dog all dwelt together in the shop and the one little back room behind. They were all poorly fed, looking thin and rather ragged. Sharp's coat could not be expected to look better than his master's; and he was well content with his hard fare, while shared with his master and little Sue. All day Sharp kept guard in the shop; he knew each basket and sieve, and all the materials of trade. When a basket was finished, Sharp noted it well, and took it under his special protection. The baskets came in exchange for the sheep; and if they afforded less variety and interest, they gave him less trouble. But Sharp did not think about any relative merits; he would guard to the last whatever was his master's and little Sue's. Sharp was so gentle with children, that the poor town children all round were pleased to run off with a bone or a bit for the dog;

and if it had not been for this general favor, it is difficult to know how he could have been fed. Little Sue was the object of his most faithful regard. Often, when the small fire was out, and the little child felt the cold, she would lie down by Sharp, with her arms round his neck, her little fair head on his black shaggy side, and the dog would not move until the sleeping child awoke.

Little Sue's life was a happy one; for, poor and young as she was, she was still a ministering child, doing all that she could to cheer and comfort her blind father, and never complaining of hunger or cold. She had a dim memory of a rough workhouse nursery, but the past faded away in the peace of the present; and bodily hardship is not the worst evil to which a child may be exposed. She was now with her father, and the nest of her little home was lined with the down of his tender affection.

It was near these poor people Mrs. Brame had lived for a year before she left for the Hall. It was true she seldom passed by that way, but there are some who seem to have a secret sympathy with sorrow; they are sure to discover it, and pour balm on its wounds. We may wonder how this can be, with no one to direct them, or point out the sufferers, or tell where they dwell; but, perhaps, if we saw in secret we should find that they asked, like one of old in his blindness, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me do?" and then, led by his

Spirit, they found their way to the poor and suffering, whom, but for guidance from above, they would have passed by unknowing, and, therefore, unheeding. Widow Garson had been as the good Samaritan of old to the blind man and his child. In the midst of her weary toil she had thought of them, sat up later at night to patch the child's little garments, or spared an hour by day to keep the little place cleanly and neat. She also trained little Sue in all the handy ways of a woman. In this way it may be said that the widow's worn fingers, while toiling for her own children's bread, wore, though unnoticed on earth, the jewel of charity. How resplendent will that gem shine on many a finger that was labor-worn here, when, at the manifestation of the sons of God, the Father shall say, "Put a ring on his hand."

There was now no night-work for the widow. When the evening shadows fell she put her children to bed, took her Bible in peace, and drank deep of the sacred stream; believing she entered into rest, that rest of the Spirit which our Saviour has promised to all who come unto him. Then she lay down on her pillow, not always to sleep, but she lay there in peace, heard her slumbering children breathe softly, and thought of her bright ones in heaven, husband and child gone before, and the short distance between them; for she knew that her steps were approaching the home of the blessed.

She thought of the goodness and mercy that had followed her all her life long, and the much tribulation through which her Redeemer had told her beforehand that she must enter the kingdom. It was all over now; trouble seemed to have quite ceased for her, her last wish had been more than granted; she had only desired that she might be strengthened for the struggle to keep on that small room. Instead of this, all was now done for her; no dread now of rent, no hunger for food, no shiver by a hearth on which no flame could be lit, and the children had bread enough, and to spare. How often now it was the joy of that widowed heart to see little Sue share her children's bread and milk, to see those blue eyes gather light, and a bloom on the little white face as she sat and smiled on their warm hearth by Sammy. This luxury of doing good had been given to the widow by those who had supplied, with no niggard hand, her need. And Rachel was often sent with a little teapot of tea to the home of the blind man when his own scanty firing was out.

And now that Rachel had a new frock, she thought at once of little Sue, saying, "Oh, mother, shall we make up my oldest frock into one for little Sue?" And the widow answered, "Yes, I was just thinking the same!" Oh, fear not widowed mother, to leave your helpless children alone. There is One who is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor

of love that you have showed for his name's sake. As you have cared for the motherless, so shall others care for your children if you be called to leave them below!

When Benjamin Tovel had by hard toil overstocked for a time his sale for the town, then it was his custom to shut up his small dwelling, pack up the baskets he could carry, with a hand free for Sue, and, with Sharp as his guide and their protector, set out for a short selling-tour through the villages round. The time had now come for one of these rounds, the last that could be taken before winter set in. Great hopes rested on it, in respect of paying the rent and helping out a little, if possible, their small winter store. How much may sometimes depend on the sale of a basket! After a just calculation of materials, time, and strength, Benjamin Tovel fixed the cost of each basket while he sat working at home; but when on the road hard bargains were too often driven with him, and he sold at a far lower price, afraid not to exchange the labor of days for some value in money at last. On the whole, it was, perhaps, easier dealing with the poor than the rich. People to whom the purchase-money was no object would beat down the cost, while the poor woman at her cottage door would examine the work well, and ponder long on the purchase; but if she bought, she would pay down the honest price.

Sue's new little frock, made out of Rachel's oldest

and therefore only new in its relation to Sue, was to be left folded up at home, ready for Sundays, and her own little old frock was once more mended up for the journey by the hands of the widow. How many there are in this happy age, clothed in fine linen and purple, and yet not unmindful of the wants of the poor; and gladly would they send little garments ready-made to children such as Rachel and Sue, could they know the name of the town and the number on their door. But there is One who knows all the children of poverty; knows the dwelling-place of each, and the depth of their need; let us ask of him, their Father in heaven, and he will lead and guide us in all he would have us do.

It was the market-day before starting for this last journey of the year. Benjamin Tovel never set out until after the market-day, as that day was sure to be the best in the week. Little Sue forgot all her troubles in the journeys before, and was ready, with bright spirits, to set out on this, telling Sharp many times they were going to-morrow, and must be sure to be ready to set out with the day. There was one trouble rested on the thoughts of the blind man,—little Sue's feet were poorly shod for the roadside; her little shoes were an old pair of Rachel's; they would be sure to give way when they trod in rough ways. The thought of this, too, had troubled the widow; she longed to shoe little Sue from her own gathered store, but hardly knew,

as it had been given her for another object, whether this would be right. But is it not written, "He understandeth our thought afar off?" And the power is his to do what we cannot; and He, who sustaineth the wing of the sparrow, careth for the feet of the pilgrim children of earth. The one resting-place for all care is the heart of our God.

On this market-day, to make sure of his time, William walked down the first thing to Ivy Lane, as he always did his errands before the corn-market opened, that he might be ready to start for home as soon as it was over. William walked the length of Ivy Lane, and began to fear the basket-maker must have moved his place of trade; but at length, at the end of the lane, he saw one basket hung out, as if by way of a sign, and, on reaching the corner, the open shop was before him. In the shop sat Benjamin Tovel, twisting willow withes; little Sue sorting them for her blind father's hand, and Sharp on the floor at her feet. William stood still a moment to look on that touching living picture before him. No one noticed his standing; people often did so to inspect the baskets piled ready for sale. Sharp lifted an eye, but looked down again, as seeing at a glance that his watch was not needed. On the face of the blind man rested the sunbeam of peace; it lay there so calmly as though no storms of earth could ever dispel or darken that soft gleam again. We see this sunbeam, sometimes, on the face of

earth's sojourners, when they have passed through fierce tempests of this world's tribulation, and become familiar with the presence of Him who walks on the waves, and cheers his disciples with the assurance, "It is I, be not afraid." This sunbeam of faith is a token from God, like the rainbow when storms have parted. And as the rainbow assures us no storms can drown this earth again, so that sunbeam of faith compels all who look upon it to believe that no future trials can sink those to whom that token is given.

William looked on the face of the blind man and remembered old Willy; he saw again the same expression of peace that he remembered years ago on that now buried face, and the thoughts it awoke so filled his attention, that he was not conscious he had stood longer at the window than a mere inspector of baskets was likely to stand. He was recalled from his musings by a curtsey from little Sue.

"Will you please buy a basket, sir? Will you please look at one?"

William walked in, and asked, "Have you some good for market use?"

The blind man answered, "Yes, sir; it is strong work I make mostly, for they sell the best."

Little Sue had dropped her willow withes, and was pulling out one and another of the baskets ready-made that stood in a corner. William felt a fear of disappointing the father and child, who had already won his interest, so he said at once, —

"I must not buy, unless the baskets are just the right thing; they are for my mother, and she is not pleased if I take her home anything that does not suit her well!"

"I think some of those will, sir; or if I might make one to any order you would be pleased to give, I should not be afraid of undertaking to please. After a week or ten days we shall be back here again."

"Do you not live here, then?" inquired William.

"Yes, sir; but I am going my rounds, to sell a few baskets before the winter sets in."

"And is this little child going to travel the roads with you?" William asked, in a tone of compassion, as he looked on the child.

"Yes, sir, I never leave her. We were parted once, but I hope never again, until God calls one home. I could not make my way without her, nor do anything else so far as I know. She is like the sunlight to me in my blindness."

"Don't you get very tired?" William asked, as he looked at the delicate form of the fair little child. But her father answered for her, —

"Then we sit down, sir, and rest." And the voice of the blind man trembled as he spoke; the subject seemed to awaken in him a fear lest any thought should be breathed that should make it a question whether he could take little Sue; for she was truly a ministering child to her father, the

spring of all labor, the rest of all toil, the fragrance and beauty of this world to him.

William saw quickly that the subject had troubled the blind man, and he said at once, —

"Well, these baskets, — let me see." And he looked with little Sue at the store she was standing by, and chose out two strong ones, of a large, useful size, saying, "I should not wonder if I am sent here again when these baskets are done for."

"Before then, I hope, sir," said the blind man, in his cheerful tone again; "for if I judge my work fairly, that would be a long day."

"Well, I will look in again before that 'long day,'" said William, "if all things go well with me;" and he put the price of the baskets into the hand of the blind man. Then he looked again on little Sue, — there was something in the simple sweetness of the child, the soft trustful expression in her eyes, — that might interest any one with a ready capability of feeling; and William thought, as he looked at her, that she wanted the tender care of some sheltering home, not the rough life of a poor road-side wayfarer. He was just going to ask if the little child had a mother, but he silenced himself, as fearing she had not, and thinking the question might trouble the blind man again. And seeing the child's feet so poorly shod for travelling, he said, in his kind, cheerful tone, —

"Those are not your best shoes, are they, my little maid?"

"They did once be the best, when Rachel gave them," said little Sue, looking down at her feet.

"Are you going your travels in these poor little shoes?" William asked again.

"We always go in we shoes," said the child, not quite understanding the drift of the question. And we should perhaps mention here that little Sue used on all occasions, and almost for all purposes, the personal pronoun "we." It stood in the place of all others with her, and had a most touching significance, as if she felt her young life so linked with her blind father that they had but one personality, and sometimes but one possession, alike expressed by the single word "we."

"I know, sir," said the blind man, now replying himself, "I know the shoes are but old; they have done well for her here at home, when she does not travel far; it's been a burden on my mind how to get her shod for the journey, but the two baskets you have bought will set her off in new boots. I never have a burden lie on my mind but it is sure to be lifted off before the time comes that I have to rise up and carry it; and, thanks to your custom, sir, we shall start cheery now."

Little Sue looked at her father, then at William, and, not understanding the conversation, she looked down at Sharp; and encouraged to freedom by William's kind tone, she said, in her artless way, "Sharp

goes with we," and put her arms round his neck, and Sharp's tail rapped the floor in a gentle response. Whether little Sue feared, as a question had been made about her shoes going with her, that the next question would be about Sharp, cannot quite be told; but William fully appreciated the presence of the dog. There was something in the little child's winning ways, something, too, in the circumstances of her poor little feet, that took him back to the childhood of Mercy. William's deep love for Mercy had not absorbed his affections, but only opened them more freshly in all the blessed charities of life; and turning to the blind man, he said, —

"You must let me cover those poor little feet. Would she like to come with me across the road there, to the shoemaker's shop?"

"I am sure, sir, you are sent here to make rough places smooth," said the blind man. "Sue, you will like to go with this gentleman, he is so good to you; he is going to put new boots on your feet. You will be thankful, I am sure."

Little Sue dropped a curtsey, but looked down; it was plain that her inclination to go with William to the shop was, to say the least, doubtful.

"Never mind," said William, "I know about little feet. Let me measure the length. There, not of these old shoes, — they are too long by half, — but of this little foot. It won't take much leather to shoe it." Then stepping round the corner, half way down

the street, he bought a pair of little boots, and soon returned with them. "Now let me see what a good guess I have made," said William.

Benjamin Tovel had left his work in the interest of the event, and now calling little Sue to him, he pulled on one little boot, then the other, felt them all over, and said, "Never fit could be better." William smiled at the child, who looked up in surprise, then down at her new boots, and sliding from her father's knee she first made her lowest curtsey, as expressive of all she felt as a curtsey could be, then stooping a little, drew up her pinafore to admire her new boots the better. Sharp was not slow to discover that little Sue had on something new. He stretched out his head and smelt the little boots, then appeared satisfied; and in this state of general interest and possession William said "Good-day," and departed.

CHAPTER IX.

LITTLE Sue stood before her blind father, still admiring her boots; at last she exclaimed, "O daddy, they be beauties! Must we lay them up with the new frock Rachel made?"

"No, little one: wear them as the gentleman said. How nicely you will trot along in that soft leather, to be sure! What a kind gentleman he was to look after the feet of my little one! What can we do for him, Sue?"

"Ask God to bless him," she answered softly.

"And he will bless him; for you mind, Sue, where it is written, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor." How he did think of your poor little feet, to be sure!"

"Let's we just run, daddy, and show Sammy and Mammy Garson. Wont they say they be beauties?"

"So we will. New shoes should always carry good news the first errand they have on the road. But you can just run there alone first, if you must be in a hurry, for market-folks may be in and I must bide in the way."

Little Sue could not be patient with such news

to tell and such boots to show; so, looking out down the lane, then back at her father, and Sharp, who watched the steps he might not follow (for he did not leave his blind master), she ran off at her best speed to tell Widow Garson.

It was market-day to Sammy, and he was not home: he was seldom home on market-days until evening drew on. But the mother and Rachel were sitting at work, when a little stamp on the stairs made Rachel look up; then a thump on the door, which Sue could not open.

"Is that little Sue?" said the widow, and the footfall rang through her heart, for the old shoes could have made no such sound on the stairs. Rachel opened the door and the child stood before them, and looking down at her feet, exclaimed, 'O Mammy Garson, see what beauties these two new boots be! There was such a good gentleman gave them to we."

Mammy Garson did rejoice, and took the child on her knee; and there was admiration of each boot, a taking off and putting on, and the story told in little Sue's own peculiar way. But she was not satisfied, because Sammy was not there.

"Let's we go, Rachel, we won't be gone long, and show them to Sammy. Will you, Mammy Garson?"

"No, wait till he comes; the time wont be long, now. You run home and tell your father I'll keep you to tea; and tell him I'll bring him in a cup,

for I know he is busy, and he can keep on till I bring you and him his tea."

"Mammy Garson, if Sammy comes home, will you tell him you did hear two new boots that did creak on the stair?"

Then back ran little Sue, but on reaching her home she found a new pleasure awaiting her there. A boy had just left a parcel, and the blind basket-maker was untying the string. The child ran to his knee, and eagerly helped in unfolding the paper. It was the very first time in her life that the mystery of a parcel had brightened the eyes of little Sue. And now, on unfolding, were found two warm pairs of new socks — red worsted socks: they must be meant for her, and who could have sent them? No one but the kind gentleman who bought her the boots. Then off came the boots again, and the red socks were drawn on; the boots came quite easily over them, and the happy little feet were complete. They ran off again, in their speed and their warmth, to bear the fresh news to Mammy Garson's home. "I am sure it seems," said Mammy Garson, "as if good angels were about. I never knew such things as happen now, all the days of my life."

Benjamin Tovel's guess was right: it was William who had completed the clothing of the little feet. He had seen the tiny white feet through the half foot of the socks that were drawn on without cover-

ing them, and he had said to himself as he walked away, "It is no use doing things by half; the child's new boots will make her feet sore in travelling, if they be not clothed in worsted beneath." Then he remembered the days long past by, when he first shared the ministering love of his little sister Rose; that snowy day, when he found her in grief for her pins, because she wanted to knit Johnny Lambert some socks, to keep his poor little feet from chilblains in the cold. And how could he do less than care for the feet of this poor little child, who stood in such need? Well the young farmer knew, from constant treading the land, what best helped feet that must walk some miles a-day. Nothing was like worsted for feet shut up in boots, which wet roads and long travelling might make stiff and hard. So he had stepped into a shop and sent the socks back, and now stood in the market with his first samples of corn.

Let none look round and question where such as William may dwell, as if they doubted because they themselves know not such men. In many a happy English village, not in William's alone, amongst the agriculturalists, such men may be found. In many a village the heart of warmest compassions has its home in a farm. Men of business and toil, men on whom the world presses hard as on others, yet men of the kindliest mould, most keenly alive to the wants of the poor, and the best means to relieve

them. God bless them, and multiply them a thousand-fold, how many soever they be, and preserve the warm glow of their charity, hidden now from the observation of this world, "to be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Benjamin Tovel rose betimes the next day. Little Sue was still sleeping, and her new boots by her pillow, and her red socks laid upon them, while her father in his blindness was making ready to go. He spread a slice of bread and butter for Sue, cut a piece ready for his own frugal meal, packed the rest of the bread and a little cheese in his pocket, then attended to all things needful at home. The shutters were not taken down, for to the blind man the day's return brought no return of light. Half the shop door was open, and this shed a glimmer into the little back room. Benjamin Tovel in quietness had spread his way out before heaven, and, now strengthened in spirit, he sat down to wait the waking up of his child. Once or twice he thought to call her; then the father's pity was stirred — it might be the last night for her in a bed until she saw her home again; so he let her sleep on, and murmured to himself the words of the 121st Psalm, — "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." It was always his habit to repeat Holy Scripture aloud, if that could be called aloud which was only a low, expressive murmur. He said, in

his blindness he missed the sweet look of the words; that no one could tell, until smitten with blindness, what it was to see no more the names of the Saviour, as they lay so fair on the page — all those blessed names of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father and the Holy Spirit the Comforter. Not to be able to open the book and to look on them there, when faith failed, or hope or love had burned dim! But, he said, "I sometimes comfort myself up with those words of our Lord, how he said, 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed,' for I think he remembered what the blind would be feeling." And this is why he said, "I crave so the sweet sound of the words." For in his blindness, sound filled the dark void for him; it seemed to take form and shape when he heard it, and wakened memory again, and came to him like the face of a friend. So he murmured softly the words, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help;" and truly the mental eye of the blind man was clear and bright, and could see things unseen by the faith of many blessed with sight.

Little Sue's constant lullaby had been her blind father's voice as it breathed Holy Scripture. From a child he had known the Holy Scriptures, taught him first by his shepherd father on the downs as he tended the slow wandering of his flock through the day; loved by him in his youth when he hid it in his heart, and cleansed his way by taking heed to that

holy word; and now remembered most vividly as his closed vision excluded the distractions of sight. So the soft murmur was not likely to awake the little sleeper. But as Benjamin Tovel finished the words, with pauses in between for meditation, as one who would not drink in the living water at a draught, but lingered tasting its sweetness; as he murmured the last words, with a love that made faith unwavering, "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore," the child awoke, and, rubbing her eyes, saw her father in the dim light.

"O daddy, 'tis night! We wont go in the dark; let's we stay till the light."

Her father rose at her call. "No, little one, 'tis morning. Ah, the shutter! I forgot it: that will let in the light. There, 'tis open now, and you can see the bright dawn. We must make haste after the little birds, and the flowers, if we can find any: they have all been awake long ago."

"Here be the new boots all safe, and the red socks; feel, daddy, how soft!" and she laid her little warm foot, clad in its red sock, in her blind father's hand. Then little Sue said her morning prayer: in this prayer she prayed for poor Sharp, that he might have food and be kept safe and well. This is not uncommon in the prayers of the poor. Their daily life is so closely associated with the creatures God has given, that they pray for their welfare with

simple faith in their heavenly Father, who created and preserves the creatures for the service of man. And of all their small earthly possessions, nothing could have half the value for the blind man and his child, of their faithful dog Sharp. And He who has revealed to us his care for the sparrow, wonders not that the poor of his people, believing his word, ask his care for the animals they have in charge. So little Sue prayed for Sharp, that it would please God to take care of him, give him food, and keep him safe and well; and her blind father said a heartfelt Amen.

All was done except breakfast; the thick slices of bread lay ready, with the scanty addition that entitled them to the pleasant name of bread and butter. It was poor fare to have only this and a little mug of cold water on which to start for a journey; but the blessing, that multiplied and sweetened the feast on the mountain slopes of the wilderness, made it enough and to spare: for they both shared their meal with poor Sharp. They had not finished, however, when the shop-door was opened, and in hastened Widow Garson with Rachel and Sammy, and she brought in her little teapot, with a hot cup of tea for father and child. Then she tied on Sue's little bonnet and fastened her cloak, and kissed the child and blessed her; and little Sue kissed Rachel, and gave Sammy an embrace; and Sharp's collar was on, and the cord fastened to it,

and the dog standing ready. On these journeys Sharp always led his blind master along, for it would have tired out little Sue before the day was half gone. There were many, too, who would not have liked the dog loose, and they would have suspected him of some wrong practice or other. But Sharp never stole; his nature was above all the bad ways of common dogs, such as thieving and snapping. He had had also the best education any dog could have had, so that no one need have feared him unless their own intentions were wrong. He was used to his service, and did the work well; he knew the pace that best suited his master, and would choose the easiest side of the road as they travelled along. And if he sometimes looked wistfully after little Sue in her freedom, with the freshness of the morning upon her, yet he never quitted his post, but held steadily on, as might best serve the need of the master he loved.

The blind basket-maker had done all for himself, and had fitted his baskets and other work of a like kind closely one in another, so that he might carry the greatest number; and yet, when he unpacked to sell, he could tell where to find each article he wanted, and how best to bind them all together again. And so they started on that breezy autumnal morning, when the air imparts vigor, and the chill of winter has not yet sharpened its freshness. The widow and her children looked after

them. She felt their helplessness, but it woke no misgiving within her. She had learned that lesson, which only experience can teach, — that our weakness is our strength; when, knowing that we are unable to do anything as of ourselves, we lean only on the help of God's heavenly grace, and find his strength is made perfect in weakness. The widow had found it so when all hope was gone, save in him who, by his Spirit, has taught us to say, "Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." Those strains, that were sung to the harp of the monarch, and breathed in plaintive tones his experience of life, were as true to the heart and the life of the poor widow, who, thousands of years later, caught their divine harmony, and made them her song in the house of her pilgrimage: while the blind basket-maker, in the strength of the same, trod with the firm step of trust the darkened highway.

When the travellers were out of sight, Widow Garson looked round to see all things were safe, fastened up again the little shutter of the small room, locked the shop-door, took charge of the key, and returned home with Rachel and Sammy, — all feeling the sadness of friends out of sight.

Benjamin Tovel, used all his life long to the free air of the wolds or the fragrance of fields, felt the fresh breeze of the morning, when outside the town, revive him, body and mind. The scents and sounds

of the country,—how much they brought back to his memory, which faithfully treasured the past! He could tell, in a moment, when they passed by a field ploughing up; or a stack-yard, where the air gave the pleasant smell of fresh straw or sweet-scented hay; or a pasture with cows; or the heavier air, where brooks were flowing full under copse-wood and hollows. His keen senses drew for him pictured scenes as he passed, filling his thankful spirit with praise to the Author and Giver of all. Little Sue had no burdens to bear; she stepped lightly along, beguiling the way to her father,—this was the work given her to do. She rejoiced in the road-side and fields: the wild blossoms were few indeed now; no blackberries or nuts hung tempting her to climb; and of all birds, only the faithful little robin trilled his kindly song to enliven the way. But little Sue sometimes sang—not in words, for she knew only the old hymns, of grave measure, her father sang to the psalm-tunes that his father sang before him, in their cottage on the downs; and though Sue liked, in solemn hours, to sing them with her father, they did not suit the light-footed dance she kept up in her new boots by the lanes, where golden foliage hung over her, and soft leaves strewed her path. So she sang out her own gladness, "a song without words," but full of deep meaning to the heart of a father; and so they passed on their way.

Benjamin Tovel always travelled the same way, the only difference being that, according to circumstances, he made his round longer or shorter. He would rather trust to old customers who knew his work well, than venture on denials from those who were strangers, and in this way, their road grew familiar to all. Yet it did not always answer, for the baskets wore long, and he found many a store furnished by him lasting still in good condition, not wanting new. But he still kept the same road; it was a cheer to the blind man to reckon on the doors here and there from which would sound for him the kindly voice of a friend. He said all knew him in these parts, and if he went in strange ways some mischief might happen before he was aware. So he kept to the old.

The first night was always spent on the farm of his master; the village where he married and first made a home. The sunshine lay warm on those memories of home, more intense for the darkness that had ever since shut them in. He knew in that village every turn of the lanes, every stile and field-path was familiar to him; but he always took one way, — to the church, with its old tower, and the grave of his young wife and infant boy. This was no sorrowful visit for Sue; her father had often told her dear tales of her mother, and had said more of the baby, his sweet looks and winning ways, than, perhaps, any father could say whose sight of things

earthly had not gone when the baby went, leaving that fresh impress untouched by another. These were tales of her home, dear to the child as household records could be, and though they sat by the grave, not the less was her mother living to the faith of little Sue, something more beautiful than anything could be in this world, and her baby brother, with happy smiles, by her own mother's side.

Little Sue had another reason for loving this rest in the churchyard. It was when they went there and sat on the grassy sod by the side of that green grave, that her father would tell her of the tomb in the rock where they laid our Lord Jesus. First he always told her again how he died on the cross; told her of the nails and the crown of thorns, and the sharp-pointed spear; told her of the poor thief who hung on a cross by the Saviour's side, of his sorrow for his sins, and his love to the dying Saviour, and that gracious Saviour's promise to him that he should be with him that day in Paradise. At this little Sue always liked to stop and ask questions; not because she did not understand, but because she liked to hear and think about it still, and then she would say, "Daddy, shall we one day be in Paradise, too, with the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on the cross?" and her blind father would answer, "Yes, little one, we may humbly trust we shall, for He is faithful who has promised, and able to keep that which we have committed to him unto that day."

Then came the history of the tomb in the rock, the grave the rich man had made, in which he laid our Lord, and the two rich men who came together and brought the fine white linen, and gently wrapped the body of the blessed Saviour with sweet spices in it, then laid him still and safe in the rocky tomb, and rolled a great stone to the door. When they reached this place, little Sue's eyes would brighten, for she knew what was coming, and she would say, "Now, daddy, lets we tell how the angels came down from the sky." Then her father would tell her, how on the third day, before the sun had risen high, the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the tomb, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. Then Jesus Christ arose from the dead to die no more, for death could have no more dominion over him. Little Sue loved to hear how the Lord Jesus arose, changing death into life and grief into joy. Then she always wanted to hear all about the angels; where they sat, what they wore, and the words that they said. And how our Saviour came to Mary Magdalene when she wept by the tomb, and blinded by her tears she did not know the Lord. The blessed story lasted long, for little Sue well remembered it all, and liked no part left out. And the rest, after the long way, was sweet, and they eat their bread there, and Benjamin Tovel often had an apple in his

pocket that served instead of water to drink. They carried a little tin mug, but the churchyard lay high, and no water flowed there. And Benjamin Tovel never felt in haste when he sat by that grave; he gladly lingered there, and often longed and trusted that, when the days of his pilgrimage were over, he might have his resting-place there beside the wife of his youth.

So little Sue stepped lightly on her way there, thinking more of the rocky tomb, and the Saviour who rose, and the angels from heaven, than of any mortal clay that was slumbering there. And it was well that she should, for the spirit slumbers not in the grave, but breathes celestial air, and rejoices in the Paradise of God.

When the rest in the churchyard and the wondrous story were ended, Benjamin Tovel rose up and stood awhile by the grave with folded hands and face upraised to heaven, as one who pleaded in prayer. Then, turning to go, little Sue put her hand in her father's; but at the church porch he always lingered again. It was from there he led his bride beneath his aged father's blessing; and as he stood there he knew exactly where his cottage home lay. He could see all the land in the light of remembrance, see the thatched roof of his cottage and the little orchard behind. He forgot it was autumn, and thought of the apple-trees full of red and white blossoms as on that bridal day, and felt

almost relieved that he could only see it as it was, not as now it must be with another wife and mother, and other children at play. All this passed in few moments, then, with a chiding thought on himself, he looked upward again in spirit; his true home was there; there his best affections reposed, there his treasure lay hid. And he and his child were travelling homeward each day, and he felt it could not be far off, for its light fell upon him, and through the dark shadows of earth it beamed on his spirit with an earnest of the glory that will yet be revealed. Then he grasped the little hand of his child in his own, and, led by Sharp, they walked on in silence together.

They soon reached the farm; it lay under the hill, with its old moat around it full of water to the brim. "Beware of the moat," said the blind man, as he held little Sue's hand tighter, and stepped on with more caution until he felt the bridge firm under his feet. It was not now, as once, made of wood, with great chains to draw it up at alarm of a foe. It was covered over with earth and gravel, and made a strong bridge, as was right that it should be in these happy days of England's peace, when no foeman's step treads on our free island soil. Now over the bridge they stood in the green porch. "Good-day, Master Tovel," said the cheerful voice of the mistress, "so you are come this way again. The men are now going to sit down to their dinner; you had

better step in and dine with them." The blind man was welcomed by all, and his child and the dog. Sharp knew his quarters well, and lay down outside the circle, quite sure of being remembered when his turn might come. The men carved for the blind man, and cut kindly for little Sue a thin slice of meat, and the little girl was hungry, and pleased to see "a real dinner." It was the horsemen's dinner, which was not until after three o'clock; and while Benjamin Tovel was asking what yield the harvest had given, and how the sheep prospered that year on the farm, little Sue fell asleep in her chair. The men left as soon as they had finished their dinner, and Benjamin Tovel, finding that the child was asleep, sat quietly on in the back kitchen with her on his knee.

Then the mistress came in, and went to her larder and brought out a large dish of provisions for Sharp, — bones, cold potatoes, and all such kind of food as is most acceptable to a large, hungry dog. Sharp was loosed from his string that he might feed outside; indeed, his master did not need him in this familiar village, where every foot of ground seemed well known to him. Sharp had not feasted so well since he was last at the farm. And now the afternoon was drawing in, the sunset glowed in the west, and though the child had awaked, yet she was tired with her long walk. So her father took her hand and led her to the barn in which he

was always welcome to sleep. It was fresh filled with wheat and barley, and full of fragrance to him. There was a heap of straw from which the flail had beaten out the grain. The thrashers were just leaving; one of them was a stranger who had come to the village and hired himself on the farm since Benjamin Tovel's last visit there. But the other man knew him well, and wishing him good-night, said, "No call to lock up the barn-door to-night if you and the dog be going to bide here." All had a kind word for the dog, pleased to see him again, and the men smiled on the child, and spoke so friendlily to the blind man that it was plain their rest would be that night amidst friends. Then the master came home, and when he heard his old shepherd was come, he would not sit down in the house until he had been out to greet him. Sharp sprang up to welcome him, and the master returned the caress; then said, "The poor child is tired, no doubt. Well, you can lay her snug on some fresh straw; she will be safe enough there; and then come in for a dish of the mistress's tea, and we can talk over the harvest, and how it's fared one with another."

So the blind man sat by his child on a truss of sweet straw, and they sang their evening hymn; then together verse by verse they repeated the twenty-third psalm, for little Sue had said, "Let's we say we psalm," which always meant the twenty-third, and from the constant habit of repeating with

her blind father, her infant memory was stored with the words of Holy Scripture. Then kneeling on the straw she repeated her short prayer, in which many names were remembered, and amongst them the gentleman who gave the new boots and little red socks. Gifts had been rare things to little Sue, and her heart was always a grateful one. Then taking off the boots from her tired little feet, and taking off her frock, she lay down in her red socks, wrapped in her little red cloak, and was soon fast asleep, with Sharp keeping close watch.

CHAPTER X.

BY six o'clock in the still November morning the thrashers came to the barn, bared their sinewy arms, took down their flails, and the sound of the thrashing began. The blind man awoke with the first sounds of the morning; he always slept lightly, for eyes never exercised under day's cheerful beam did not seal up in the deep slumber that sight allows man. He woke up in his darkness to all the sounds so familiar to him; the horsemen feeding the laboring team, the cheerful cackle of hens, the hungry grunt of the pigs as they turned out from the straw, and all that told the cheer of day was reviving. He had not slept soundly, for the past day filled his memory; thoughts reawakened would not slumber within him, and they kept him wakeful and musing upon them. He counted the night hours by the crowing of the cock, as he had often done before,—the true bird of dawn, that crowed not until midnight was past, then gave his shrill clarion note once, and twice as two o'clock came, and so on until four or five, when he reckoned day was begun, and crowed then without reference to time. He cheered

the night to the blind man, who could take no note of its hours when he slept in the town, except by his rested or unrested feeling; as Ivy Lane did not wake early to welcome the day. But the blind man did not wake up to darkness only; he woke up to His presence, who was the Light of Life to him.

Little Sue heard not the heavy beat of the flail, nor the cackling of the hens as they crowded the barn-doors to welcome the thrashers, nor yet the lowing of the cows as they trooped in slowly at six to the milking, nor all the early stir of cheerful life under which her father sat musing in a sense of enjoyment. The child was still sleeping when the master looked in saying "Well, how have you rested? What, the poor child asleep still! Don't be hurrying away, if you like to stay over to-day; you can dine with the servants, and sleep again in the barn. You can have some milk for your breakfast if the child goes to the mistress."

Benjamin Tovel was well content to spend another day in the village, and little Sue, when she woke, was delighted. But before she went out of the barn she hastened to say to her father, "Let's say we Morning Prayer," which meant her own brief petitions, and she knelt down in a corner, away from the centre where the men beat out the grain. But the thrasher lately come, the one who was a stranger, saw the little child at prayer, and stopped resting on his flail, and as she rose up from her prayer, he

wiped a tear from his eye, but he said not a word, and fell to his thrashing again. Little Sue knew not that any eye saw her pray, but to her it was as natural as the daily bread that she eat; and her father in his blindness saw not what passed around. The thrasher had been taught to pray when a child; he had knelt then as he saw little Sue kneeling now, but it had been long a forgotten service to him, for it is only the Holy Spirit who can truly teach us to pray. He shows us our sinfulness, and shows us our Saviour, and when the sinner and the Saviour have met, then prayer is as natural and necessary to us as the food that we eat, and the air that we breathe. On this morning the sight of the little child turning first as she did to her Father in heaven, touched the heart of the thrasher in the barn; he felt his spirit softened and his own thoughts turned to God. He longed to feel like that little child, and, though he remembered not the Scripture, yet it was fulfilling in him, as our Saviour has said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye can in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

It is often by means the most simple and gentle that the Holy Spirit of God draws the wanderer back to his heavenly Father in repentance and prayer. The thrasher remembered the parable of the Prodigal Son, almost the only passage of Holy Scripture that he did remember, and who that had once heard it could ever forget that! It seems to be

left on record, the most touching truth ever written in words, that it may lay hold of the affections, may never be forgotten, and may at length lead the wandering sinner to the heart of his Saviour, the lost child to the forgiving embrace of his Father. And even now, as the thrasher thought of the little girl at prayer, he said in his heart, "I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned."

When little Sue was dressed in her new boots and her frock she went with her father to wash her face and hands at the pump. This was a morning luxury when the pure stream flowed freely, laving hands and face until her cheeks glowed rosy red. They had no water laid on to their little house in the town, and, obliged to have it all from a running tap in the lane, brought home in a pail or pitcher, it was not like this; and little Sue stood before the mistress with her fair clustering curls all clinging wet round her head, her little frock dripping, but her face bright as the morning.

"There, stand and dry by that fire while I crumb you some bread," said the mistress; then breaking bread to fill a basin she poured in the milk, saying, "Carry that to your father; take care how you go, and come back for your own."

Little Sue had never carried a full basin before. She held it tight with both hands as she stepped across the farm-yard, but the poor little feet were

not used to the straw; the new boots, still slippery, glided from under her, and she fell flat on the ground, with milk and bread strewn around. She gave a cry of distress, — it went through her blind father's heart, for he knew not the cause, but rose to make his slow, uncertain way to her. The thrashers looked out, the one who had felt little Sue's morning prayer, laid down his flail and hastened to her; the other said to her father, "There's no great harm done, only the child has spilled the milk; she will soon be all right again." Sharp ran out at the cry, and now stood beside her, not offering to touch the bread and milk that lay strewn around. Poor little Sue held up her pinafore crying, and Sharp laid his nose on her little bare arm. "Come now, cheer up!" said the man, "or the hens will get all, and poor Sharp lose his turn. See, he wont eat while you cry." Little Sue looked down at this, and the man picked up some bits of the bread and gave them to the dog, who, encouraged by seeing the face of the child, began to lick up the remainder as fast as he could. The thrasher then took little Sue in one hand and the empty basin in the other, back to the house.

"Here's a bad job been and happened; the poor babe couldn't hold her feet, and fell on the straw."

Poor little Sue's face of trouble, afraid to look up, softened all hard reproving.

"You must learn to keep your feet if you mean to

be useful," said the mistress, as she took the empty basin from the hand of the thrasher.

"I'll just wait and carry it, and then it will be safe," said the man, and the good mistress filled up two basins, giving them in charge to the thrasher, who carried them with due caution, and little Sue stepped safely after him. Sharp had licked up the spilt breakfast, without snapping at the hens who hastened round him to help, though it was quite evident to all that those plump barn-door fowls did not want bread and milk, and might, if only in compassion, have left it to the visitor whose lean sides told of hunger. Sharp now followed little Sue back to the barn.

After breakfast in the barn the same thrasher said kindly, "Don't trouble about the basins, I'll hand them in to the mistress." And then, seeing Benjamin Tovel about to turn out with his baskets for the day, he said, "Be you coming back here again for the night?"

"Yes, I think so, as far as I know," said Benjamin Tovel.

"Perhaps you and the child wouldn't be against taking a bit of supper with me? I shall be home between five and six, but if you get round before I'll mind the wife to be ready, and I'll see you back to the barn afore it be late."

"Thank you kindly, we'll come then I am sure," said Benjamin Tovel; "which way does your cottage lie?"

"Why, just ask in the street for Lockwood, and they will show you the turn, then our cottage lies the last down Nightingale Lane, hard by the copsewood, — the one with the porch; you can't mistake it if you know these parts."

A shudder passed through the frame of the blind man, he was silent a moment, there was strength for him in silence, then he answered, "I remember it well; I will come."

It was the blind man's own home, filled with memories of the past. He had never thought to cross that threshold again; he had felt for a moment as if he could not venture there; but used as he was with a child's earnest trust to follow the guidance that came day by day, and having said he would go before he knew where, he would not now refuse the wish, because of what it might cost himself.

The day passed in many visits to houses far and near. He had good success in his sale of baskets, his load began to lighten. In many a cottage home he found a kindly welcome, and had no need to return to his master's for dinner. The child, too, and the dog were well remembered by many, and the day passed amidst greetings and kind inquiries and converse. To some the blind man was a messenger of comfort, for he knew how to speak a word in season to them that were weary. The parish was a very large one, and Benjamin Tovel took only the side that lay round his master's farm; intending to

return home across the other end, which lay some miles from this, and further from the town.

And now the evening drew on, and he must make for the cottage down Nightingale Lane. He would not tell the child, not at least until they were home. And the visit would be the easier to him if none around him knew what he felt.

"We must go now to sup with that kind friend of yours," said Benjamin Tovel to his child.

"Will we know the way, daddy?"

"Yes, little one, daddy's feet know this way by the feel of the ground;" and the father thought how in that cottage, seven years before, the little voice prattling beside him awoke the joy of a first-born.

They reached Nightingale Lane, and Benjamin Tovel murmured forth the words again, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help!" He opened the wicket gate, trod the garden path, and stood by the porch. He perceived the fragrance of the last blossoms of climbing plants his hand had planted and trained, and the feeling came over him again of the door of his home. Lockwood, the thrasher, came out to welcome them, and a friendly-speaking woman received them within. The woman had much to say, though when its meaning was weighed it all came to but little. She was one of those good-natured women who make a habit of talking, of the sound of whose voice others often get weary; it is borne with as the whirl of a factory

wheel would be by those compelled to hear it, and they cease to give heed to the unimportant meaning. It is plain that the good-natured woman expected no one to talk but herself. Her husband the thrasher was silent as if by habit; and Benjamin Tovel felt almost relieved that to him the dwelling no longer seemed the same, as when the pleasant words and gentle silence of Susan, his own wife, made the evenings music for him.

After supper the woman cleared away, and went to wash up her tea-things in the little back kitchen and put her children to bed, and the thrasher was left alone with Benjamin Tovel and little Sue.

"'Tis a heavy affliction you have to bear to be blind," said the thrasher.

"'Tis a loss," replied the blind man, "and makes you seem helpless here. But if the good God do but show us the path-way of life, and lift up the light of his countenance upon us, there is no darkness of nature can baffle that light."

"I believe it," said Lockwood. "Do you think that light ever comes unawares upon any?"

Benjamin Tovel replied, "Yes, often; no doubt, those who thought only of this world find a light shining upon them, minding them of a better. 'Tis a beam of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God; but then they must follow on as it leads them, or it will be darkness again."

"Can that be proven from the Bible?" asked

Lockwood. "I have a Bible here, and so has my wife, but it's not much that we know of the comfort that lies in them."

"I can't help you to places," said Benjamin Tovel, "for I lose all my count of the chapters and numbers. But there is a text that says, I think it is in Isaiah the Prophet, "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear.

"Well, those be words! I am sure," said the thrasher, "it can't come down plainer than that. Do you call to mind the Prodigal Son?"

"Yes," answered Benjamin Tovel; "I love the sound of each word of it as I once loved the sight of them."

"I could read it," said Lockwood, "if I knew where to light on it."

"I can tell you that," said Benjamin Tovel; "it is the 15th of St. Luke."

"I wish my wife were here," said Lockwood, "that's to say if she would listen; she is such a woman for the talk all her self, that when you do speak she scarce seems to hear. I often say if I had my way with the young I would teach them to listen, then when they came of age they would know what it meant. 'Tis so comfortable-like when you come upon one who can attend on the few words you may have to say."

"Well," said Benjamin Tovel, "we can always find One above ready to listen. There are many words in the Bible that mark that out clear."

"O Master Tovel,' said the thrasher, "when you are speaking to me I almost feel as if I could part with the light of this world to get that of a better. I take it you followed on after this thing from a child?"

"The poor prodigal did not," the blind man replied.

"Ah, there it is again," said the thrasher. "If you don't strike out comfort from my hard heart as the steel do from the flint! Well, as I said, I will read it. It doesn't seem to lie at the fore part, so I had best read the whole chapter, I think I'll just call my wife. Maybe she'll take more notice, you being a stranger. Sally, you come and listen. We have got some good discourse here." So the wife wiped her wet hands and came in and sat down, and he read the 15th chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke. The blind man was soon so lost in its infinite sweetness that he forgot all the past, forgot all these dim surroundings of home, and felt as in the immediate light of his Saviour, wrapped in the unutterable joy that divine presence brings.

"There," said Lockwood the thrasher, "I don't know, I am sure, but I would glad enough be the prodigal to get such a welcome home." The wife was going to give a reproof upon this, but her husband took courage and said, "Now, Sally, you hold your talk back, and just listen a bit, or you'll be none the better, and hinder those that would!"

"As I take it," said Benjamin Tovel, "our blessed Saviour had a will of his heavenly grace, to show us how the farthest off could be brought back to the Father's heart, that every poor wandering soul, lost to God and itself, might feel after that blessed hope and return."

"But," said Lockwood, "who knows the longful way it may be! and how one is ever to travel it over, is what I can't see."

"It is but one step at a time," the blind man replied; "and He who gives grace for the first step will not fail till the last one be over. Our trust must just be wholly in him, who is drawing our poor hearts to himself; and do you think that he who could draw our souls by his grace when we were never so much as casting a look after him, would give us up when our face was once set for him? Sure the prodigal finds that out plain!"

"No, I don't suppose as He would," answered Lockwood the thrasher; "but what do you reckon the first step to be?"

"Well," replied the blind man, "I suppose the Bible tells us that when it says of Saul, the blasphemer, 'Behold, he prayeth!'"

The thrasher looked up at the blind man; it seemed to him as if Benjamin Tovel had read his inmost heart and answered to the thoughts that were there. For was it not his own neglect of prayer that had brought conviction of sin that morning to him?

But the blind man saw not the look fixed upon him, and, hearing no reply, he went on in his own quiet way. "Prayer, I reckon, must be the first step; and though 'tis a step that a little child may take, yet it spans the whole way between earth and heaven. For prayer takes hold of Christ, and to have a hold of Christ is to have a sure hold of heaven."

"Well, if I thought that, wouldn't I pray," said the thrasher.

"Prayer," said Benjamin Tovel, "is the breathing of the Holy Spirit within us. We must look up to God for the power to pray. It is not the repeating of words, but the desire of the heart that is prayer. If we long for the Saviour, and feel our sins against him, we cannot help praying; or if our heart be dark and hard we can beg of him to make it a new heart, filled with his love, and he will, for he does answer prayer."

"It comes to me," said Lockwood, "like a call from him above bidding me come to him, and by his help I will."

"There's thousands," said the blind man, "to whom it has come as to you, and they proved it all true, and so will you if you follow on. The Bible is the glass that will show you your Saviour; you keep on at it, and never give in till you see him, and pray without ceasing; don't think it belongs only to morning and evening, but lift up your heart oftentimes unto God,

and you will find light glimmer, and grow brig and brighter, until you see the Saviour, and your heart will rejoice, and no man can take that from you."

The night had now darkened, and though same to the blind man, it was not to little Sue the dog. The thrasher said he must see them to the barn; there Benjamin Tovel found his s tuary for prayer, while the thrasher returned t dwelling, and went to his chamber to pray. visit, paid by constraint, had been so hallowed sweetened to Benjamin Tovel, that his spirit wa longer oppressed in the thought of his early h It was true that he had buried his earthly h from that home, but he had been led there agai welcome the immortal life of a soul new-born above. It seemed now to him that the shadov death hung no longer over that little dwellin earth, but rather that heaven opened above it, the angels of God ascending and descending. never thought with sadness of his marriage h again, but always saw it illumined with light above; it was from there that his wife and i had been carried to heaven, and over it breathe quickening Spirit of life. Well could he join i tle Sue's psalm, that evening, and say, "Yea, th I walk through the valley of the shadow of d I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; thy and thy staff they comfort me."

The next morning, little Sue was up early, not having had so long a walk the day before, and she was delighted to stand out in the farm-yard, and watch all the life that was moving around her. She was standing there with her little tin mug in her hand, for her father had been drinking the fresh water that welled up from the beautiful spring; and the milkmaid, seeing her, called her into the cow-house, and gave her a little stool to sit there, that the sweet smell of the cows might make her grow hearty, and then milked one little stream into the tin mug. Little Sue was delighted to see milk that "did bubble," and wanted to take it to her father in the barn; but the milkmaid bade her drink it, and she should have another.

Lockwood, the thrasher, stepped out to the house for the basins of bread and milk, and both came in safely, to little Sue's delight, who had only one wish, it seemed now, in the world, and that was to "have Sammy with we at the farm." While they took their breakfast, the thrasher sat down with them, and spoke again of the subject that filled his soul with a hope unknown before. So they passed half-an-hour, for the thrasher's time was so far his own, that he worked by weight of wheat, not by hours, and he knew he could make up that time in the day, so as not to be behindhand when the market measure was wanted. Just before the travellers started, the thrasher's wife ran up with an apple-turnover for little Sue;

it was packed up in paper, and so, she said, ride safe enough in a basket; and then, amic blessings of earth and of heaven, they set fc again on their way.

Benjamin Tovel now directed his cours large village that lay about four miles to the his master's farm. The walk was a lonely on no baskets were sold on the way. About n they arrived at the village, and, sitting down or grass under a tree, they dined on the apple-tu the wife of the thrasher had given. Then refr they made the round of the village, as far child could walk without over-fatigue. The as much basket-work as Benjamin Tovel coul and then again found shelter for the night in a It was not like the last barn; this one was fille peas; but the tired child was soon asleep heap of the stalks and pods that lay on the The blind man was known at this farm wh was a shepherd, and had often brought shee his master's for sale, or for pasture; for the la came wilder and more open here, and many were fed on the fine herbage thereabouts. Thi was in a field; so there was no pleasant farr to amuse little Sue with its cheerful sight sounds; but she was always happy with her and Sharp. She missed the bread and mi breakfast when she rose from her rough littl but she never wanted anything that was not

to her, and the bread and cheese they brought with them was not eaten yet, because they had found friends who had fed them. It was hard and stale, but it satisfied hunger. They drank from a little stream, had their morning service together, and then went on their way.

This day was Saturday, and Benjamin Tr[illegible]el made his way back, not by the same roads, but to a little town that lay about four miles north of the village where his master's farm lay. Here he hoped he might sell the baskets still left. Here, too, he could spend the Sunday, and then he thought on the Monday to make his way towards home, through the far-off end of the village to that where his master's farm lay. This he could do without stopping for the night, getting on the same day to a farm only four miles from the town where he lived; he thought he might sell all his baskets, and yet, by starting early on Tuesday morning, walk the five miles without hurting the child, and be at home in his little shop by the time when market-people came. This was his plan, and all seemed to promise well, for the sale of his stock of work had been more than usually good. So on this Saturday they set out in good time from the barn filled with peas, and went cheerily forward on their way.

Until now the weather had been fine, but they had not walked far on this Saturday when a storm darkened the sky. They hastened on, but no shelter

was near. Wind and rain drove fiercely along, the child's thin garments were soon clinging around her slender limbs, and, though led by her father, it was hard work for her to keep on. The food, too, was soaked, and the ground was soon heavy with mud. Poor Sharp in the front held his way bravely on, facing the storm, and gently pulling at the string as if to help them along. Little Sue held on as long as she could, then said, "Oh, Daddy, we do be so tired! lets we stop just a bit!"

Her blind father lowered his baskets, and took her on his back; there was no standing still, — they must make their way on.

At length a cottage came in sight, the woman had opened the door, and was looking out into the driving rain as if expecting to see some one. It seemed that she saw not the one she expected, but she did see the blind man, against whom the pitiless storm beat until he staggered beneath it and the weight that he bore.

"Come in, come in here," said the woman.

Benjamin Tovel stopped in his blindness, hearing the voice, but not knowing whence it came. But Sharp heard it too, and turned at once to the door. Then the blind man held back, saying, "We are all wringing wet, not fit to enter your door; I am in hope of reaching the town."

"You will be drowned before you can get there," said the woman. "The river's overflowed its banks,

and the rain will swell the current. Come in here, and don't fear; you can't make me worse. Dog and all; I see he is the right sort," she said, as Sharp, half ashamed of his boldness, drew his blind master in.

"There, now, let down the child; poor rogue, what a sop! Well, I had lighted up a good fire, expecting my old man in; but there's no doubt they have kept him to a bit dinner where he works today, and you shall just stand in his shoes. Come here, my poor babe, to the fire, and let me have off these wet things!" Then fetching an old blanket, she wrapped the poor child in it. The comfort was so great of the warm blanket around her, and the warm fire by her side, that the little traveller, quite spent with her struggle with the storm, laid her head on the arm of the good woman's chair, and in less than five minutes fell asleep.

"That's the comfort of young days," said the woman; "all their troubles end with sleep!"

"And it will be our comfort, too," said Benjamin Tovel; "if we sleep in Jesus we shall sorrow no more at all."

"There, now," said the woman, "I didn't think to hear such words as those come from out of this storm. But what can be done for you? There's a great-coat of my old man's, — a rare old coat it is; he'll be wishing he had it if he's out in this storm, but maybe he just left it here ready for you. So you put it on,

and I'll dry yours a bit, and as for the dog, I suppose he'll be all right."

"Yes, thank you," said the blind man; "this is shelter indeed."

While busy in all this truest charity, the woman every few minutes opened the door, unmindful of the pouring rain that streamed in; then, shutting it, said, "I should not like my old man to be out in the storm, and not see his door open to hurry him in." Then she added, "But don't you feel no ways ashamed if he comes. He is such a man for good ways, he is always a tutoring of me. And wont he be pleased to see his home made a refuge, and the child in the corner? for he's none of his own."

But her old man did not come; so, after feeling quite sure, she sat down to her frugal dinner, which she made Benjamin Tovel share. Sharp, too, had all the bits her kind hands could hunt up; but she would not wake the child, saying, "Let her be; sleep is all as good as food to the poor, tired babe; we can give her a bit when she wakes of herself."

As they sat there at dinner, they had pleasant discourse. This good woman was very unlike the thrasher's kind wife in one thing, — she was ready to speak when words were wanted; but if Benjamin Tovel said a word, her very silence invited him on. Only once she broke out saying, "That's just like my old man; he sees a deal further than I do. But I have a glimmer, and sure it can only come from

the Saviour, and I take comfort that it's like the star that led the wise men; I keep looking up in its light, and it always minds me of him!"

When little Sue woke, quite rested with sleep, her clothes were dry and warm, and the woman dressed her in them, then gave her food, and the child had revived again as bright as when she started that morning.

Before sunset the storm cleared away; Benjamin Tovel felt anxious to go, and the good woman would not detain him, though she said, "She did wish her old man had come in before they had to go." Warned by her, Benjamin Tovel turned from the road that would have led him by the river over the wooden bridge, and went the further way over a bridge of solid masonry to the town; thinking as he went how goodness and mercy had followed him, and thinking, too, what it was to be led by the Good Shepherd. Who need fear any evil that had his presence with them? The kind woman only thought of having sheltered a blind man and his child; but there was One even then saying, "Ye have done it unto me." And though in her thoughts the act was but nature, yet, done as it had been with heavenly love in her heart, the reward would be of grace, and abundantly given.

They reached the little town, safe, warm, and dry, and went to a wayside inn, that suited travellers so poor. It was, too, a respectable little inn, kept by

people who made their honest living by fair means: what they sold they sold pure. They kept a cow also, and did a little farming in a very small way. They knew the blind man well, as he had been there before, and the woman welcomed him in, and said she could lodge him better that night than she had done before; for she had a little room empty, and a bed where he might sleep for sixpence a night. This was no little comfort. The market had long been over; Benjamin Tovel could not hope to sell any baskets; but he had no regrets, he had been saved out of trouble, and he went thankfully to rest in the little room ready for him, and Sharp was allowed to sleep within doors.

Sunday morning rose fair; Benjamin Tovel was able, at the wayside inn, to have milk and bread for their breakfast. Then, strengthened in body, they went out to church. Sharp went with them, but without his string, as little Sue could guide her father, and when they went in Sharp would wait outside the door. It kindled the soul of the blind man when the prayers and thanksgivings arose. The child listened too; her young spirit, trained in prayer, felt at home in the worship of God. Happily for little Sue, and for all who worshipped there, the belief, in which we record the wondrous history of our Lord, was not hurried over, as it too often is in less than a minute, but time was given for thought and feeling to breathe it. And when the joyful sentence came,

"The third day he rose again from the dead," there was a gladness in the tone of the minister that seemed to express the change from death unto life, and the child remembered her story of the churchyard, and slipped her hand into her father's, who understood the token well, and his thoughts followed hers through the grave and gate of death to that joyful resurrection.

Heavy rains fell again that night, but the travellers were sheltered. Through the thin wooden partition in their chamber they heard the voice of the innkeeper in prayer. He was offering many petitions for good and against evil, and amongst them they heard him pray that he and his wife might be kept from the love of money, and the desire of unlawful gain. This desire showed at once the source from which arose his honest dealing and wish for the welfare of all. Many a keeper of inns and lodging-houses great and small, it is to be feared, must one day look back with sorrow and shame on the trade that was not honest, and often made the occasion of evil. But this innkeeper will not have that grief; and many, we trust, will be found then, like him, to have prayed from the heart, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," and to have watched against temptation's power and put away from them all dishonest gain and unrighteous dealing, walking before God and man in truth and uprightness. "Keep innocency and take heed to the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace at the last."

CHAPTER XI.

HEAVY autumnal rains fell again on that night, but the morning rose clear and bright. Benjamin Tovel spent two hours in the town, selling a few baskets there. This left only three of his stock on hand, and he hoped he might dispose of these three on his way. They now set their faces for home, thinking to reach and cross the far end of the parish, where they spent the first two nights of their journey, sleeping two miles farther on, and reaching home in good time for market people next day. They were now on the right side of the stream, and would not have to cross it again. After three miles of lanes they came to pasture land; this lasted for some way by the side of the river. Here they made their halt for rest, not intending to stop again until they reached the farm where they expected to sleep, four miles from the town. Little Sue was getting used to her long walks, and bore them well; indeed her light form was no weight for her feet clad in good boots to carry. They found a seat on the trunk of a fallen tree, and took their refreshments and then hastened on. Benjamin Tovel had heard

at his master's farm that a man of wealth had hired the large farm at this end of the parish, called the Grange, and the basket-maker had intended to make his way there and try his success at that door; but having waited in the little town, the day was now advancing, and he felt unwilling to cross and recross the river again. The stream was full to its brink, and flowing rapidly down, and in the distance he could hear the roar of the waters as they turned the great wheel of a mill.

"Keep close by me here," the blind man said to his child; and Sue came and took hold of his coat. They had walked on some way in silence, when Sharp gave a bound towards the river. Little Sue looked, and a scream from his child stayed the steps of the blind man. "O Sharp!" she exclaimed, and the dog bounded again; the blind man let go the string; a moment more and a plunge told that Sharp was in the stream. Then a shout rose in the distance, from voices of men, and Sue put her hand in her father's and said, "O daddy, 'tis a child, a little child in the river!"

Then the voices drew nearer. Then the tramp of horse hoofs that galloped fast on, and a man's voice, in anguish, said, "My child, O my child!" "The dog is in," shouted the men; "'tis a chance he may save her." The voices came from the opposite side of the river, the deep moan of the mill stream filled the ears of the blind man, the current was

hurrying the helpless child on to the dark gulf and crushing wheel, and the dog, would he follow? Sharp would never give in, — never turn back alone; this his master knew well. Then a cry burst again from the men, "Cheer him on! Cheer him on! He is almost up to her now!" Then a silence of breathless excitement, intense looks on the stream, on the helpless child, and the dog.

Benjamin Tovel alone stood calm in his blindness, with his face raised to heaven, and his hands clasped in prayer. Would any think of the blind man as helpless? Rather might they then see a reason why blindness should separate between some and the turmoil of earth, for who else in that awful moment could gather up their thoughts to a prayer? With all beside him it was helpless excitement; for what could they do? They pressed to the edge of the river, but who, unable to swim, could enter its current as it bore swiftly down with the open jaws of the mill-wheel in view? Yet they strained every nerve in intense suspense; while Benjamin Tovel stood where Sharp left him, asking deliverance from Heaven.

The men followed the dog by the side of the river "There! there! he has her! Brave old fellow! here! here!" and the men leaned over the bank to encourage the dog, who tried once and again to turn against the stream with the burden he bore. "On, on!" cried the men; but Sharp was strug-

gling still; at last he swam round with his head from the wheel. Then a shout arose from the river brink, and the men tried all means to entice the dog to shore, where they could help him to land, and where the child's father stood pale and silent as death. But Sharp knew but one master, the blind man on the other side, who stood there in calmness, waiting for him. When little Sue saw that Sharp was making way for the side where they stood, she let go her father's hand, and ran towards him with arms stretched out to the dog and the child that he bore. Sharp made a desperate effort, laid his burden on the grass safe beside little Sue; then, streaming with water and spent with the struggle, he reached his master's feet and lay down exhausted there.

Meanwhile one of the men had run and crossed the river by a wooden bridge, and the father, seeing the child landed safe, hastened too. The man saw him coming and stood beside the child, who lay all unconscious with her head on little Sue's arm. The father took her up. "There must be hope!" he said, "I will carry her home." Then, telling the man to take the horse and ride for the doctor, he hurried on, only turning a moment to say to Benjamin Tovel, as he stood some little way off, "My good friend, make haste to my house, — the red house over there. Bring the dog and the child." One of the men on the other side had run to bear the tidings of safe on land to the mother, in her anguish at home.

The rest turned away when the excitement was over, and Benjamin Tovel and his child were left alone with Sharp panting before them.

Little Sue's garments were wet with embracing the child; and now she knelt down to comfort by her caresses the exhaustion of the dog. Deep was the thank-giving from the heart of the blind man; had they not been passing by at that moment the child must have been lost. Then he heard the hard breathing of the dog, and knelt down by his side and held bread in his hand; but Sharp would not eat. Little Sue watched in the greatest distress, as he lay stretched out at full length, his eye now turned on his blind master, now looking after her. "O daddy, will he die?" And she burst into tears at the thought of that grief, and from the blind man's darkened eyes there stole down slow drops of sorrow, which fell on the dog, whom his hand still caressed. Sharp heard the child cry, and closed his eyes as if in silent despair. It was plain the dog was quite exhausted, and they were left alone. The blind man could venture nowhere, and how could he trust little Sue by the terrible river! The bridge that crossed it there was at that time only of wood, with a rail on one side, and the stream flowed level with it, swollen high by the rain, so that to get even a first footing on it required some caution now.

"We can do nothing, little one, but wait here," he said. "If we be forgotten on earth, there is One

above who thinketh upon the poor and needy, and I am sure such are we. Help will come; we must wait!" But at the Grange all were engrossed by the child, and the suspense while life hung in doubt. The master had said, "Take care of the man and the dog when they come." And having said that, he, for a time, thought no more on the subject, feeling sure they would follow, and supposing them there.

But now the sun was declining, and the air growing chill, and the cold mist of the river began to fold its damp mantle around them. It rose heavily, and soon would conceal them from sight. There was death in remaining in those damps for the night, for the ground under their feet had been soaked with the rains; yet no power to leave them seemed given them then. The blind man called his child to him, opened his coat, and folded her close, trusting to shield her from the chill of the air, but her little garments were wet, and she shivered with cold. Even now, from the heavy air around him, the blind man who knew those river fogs well, feared that they must be hid from all who might pass within call.

While bereft almost of hope, a large dog made his way with swift foot through the fog; he had evidently come on a sagacious scent of some one there, and now perceiving them to be in a helpless condition, he came nearer, smelt the dog, looked up at the blind man, and stood still beside them. Benjamin Tovel's spirits revived; he said, "Here is com-

fort; this dog has a master, and we shall be saved." Still the dog waited. Then a whistle was heard; the dog pricked his ears, but did not leave them. The whistle pierced the fog again, and the dog gave a bark. A few moments more of lightened suspense, and a man came in view, — a broad-chested, strong-built, laboring man with a face whose kindly glow shed a sunbeam upon them. The man looked on the blind traveller with his child in his bosom, on the dog exhausted and wet at his feet, breathing heavily, and his languid eye closing. The man looked upon them a moment in silence, then said, "What has happened here? You are travellers, I take it? What ails the dog?"

"We are travellers," answered Benjamin Tovel, "and the dog plunged in the river and brought a drowning child safe to land; but he lies spent with the struggle, and I, sir, am blind."

"And where's the child?" asked the man. "Whose child did he save? Is the child here in the fog?"

"No," answered Benjamin Tovel; "there were many near then, and they carried the child home; to the Grange they said it belonged, and told us to follow; but the dog could not stand, and I durstn't trust my child, and I am quite blind."

"From the Grange? Farmer Burton's child could it be? And they left you to perish, and the dog dying already! Why, it makes one feel mad! But cheer up; you're safe now, and the dog shall be

cared for. You shall find that there's heart in this bad old world still! Wait here, just a minute, and I'll be back again!" Then laying down his rough coat he said, "Sit there on that; the ground is soaking wet with the rains we have had. Now, Nep, you lie there, and keep these poor folks warm, if you can!"

Then the man hastened away, and it was not long before they heard a loud hearty "Halloo!" There was life in the sound; even poor Sharp raised an ear, but it fell quickly again; then through the mist the loud "halloo" rang once more! Nep barked, as if in reply, but another voice shouted "halloo" back again. Then all was silent until, when a few more minutes had gone, and the dense fog seemed to stifle the breath of the child, the man returned, bringing with him another; they bore a hurdle in hand, and the other, who was but a lad, pressed eagerly on.

"It is them, for certain such a dog never breathed, and left to die in the fog!"

"Here," said the first man, "can the little child walk? She is cold and stiff, I declare! Still, she had best walk, if she can. Give the coat to the poor dog."

And with careful hands they laid first the coat on the hurdle, then lifted Sharp on it, the other dog standing by in his mute compassion.

"You'll be taking them off to the Grange?" said the young lad.

"No, not I," answered the other; "I'll have no hand in that. They that once left them to perish may look to it now!"

Benjamin Tovel heard some debate as to where they were to go, and said, "If you can shelter a poor man for the night, sir, pray take us with you. The dog and the child will both die without some tender care, and where can it be found if we be once parted from you?"

Benjamin Tovel's whole heart overflowed to his deliverer, and it looked like death returning to be parted from him again.

"That's what I hold to, home with me," said the man. "If you have never heard speak of my missus, you will soon know what it is to set foot in her door."

"Is the dog likely to hold out till we can get him some cheer?" Benjamin Tovel asked, in a mingling of hope and fear.

"Yes, for all I can tell," the friendly man replied; "but you come home to my missus; there's none can go further than she in bringing back life to those given over for dead. Let us once get to her, and there'll be a power of comfort, you'll see; this lad here knows as well as I that what I say is true."

"True enough," said the other. "Come, see now, can't you walk?" for the blind man's limbs were benumbed, and he was spent with all that had passed in these few hours by the river. "I can tell you, she

you be going to, saved my life outright, when I was ill with the small-pox, and none else would come nigh; and she can say those sort of things I have not cared to forget. I say she's a woman as makes affliction a blessing! There, now, lay a hand on my shoulder, and you'll manage to walk. I have got your baskets safe on my back."

The first man had been laying the poor dog "more easy," as he said, and speaking to him a bit, bidding him keep his heart up. "There now, he understands that! They are so sensible like! Let's move on a bit."

The man and the lad carried Sharp on the hurdle; the blind man laid his hand on the young shoulder beside him; little Sue held her father's hand, and Nep followed behind. They walked slowly on, remembering the blind man and child, and now and then a pleasant word cheered the strangers along.

"I can't think now," said the lad, "what master will say when he hears what has happened, with you almost dead in the fog! I have made up my mind just to run back to-night, for he is that sort of man I don't believe he would sleep, nor let any one else that had feet to run on. I was one of them that stood on the other side of the river; but the moment I saw the child safe on land, I made no more ado there, but ran off to our mistress, for I said, "She'll be dead there with terror before any can tell her it's well with the child!"

"I hope it is well," said the blind man.

"I can promise you that," answered the lad. "I stayed till I heard them say she was safe to live, and then I went off to fodder the cattle, and was now making my way back to the Grange to see all safe with you. I am sure I never misdoubted but you would be there; for, if you'll believe me, I didn't note you were blind."

"It's all for the best," answered Benjamin Tovel. "If we had been fetched to the great house, I fear the dog would have died."

"That's a sure word," said the man in front. "I'll be bound there's but one that can save him. She will; and that's for why it was all ordered so!"

No wonder the spirit of the blind man revived under such an outpouring from true hearts as this. They left the fatal fields, then trod a long country road, — very long it did seem to the blind man and his child.

"There, now," said the first man, "we have passed the bounds; we are in our parish now, and half a mile will bring us home."

Little Sue made no complaint, though her tired feet almost refused to bear her on; and the blind man believed that strength would hold out. They had been delivered, — they should not faint now. At length they turned down a lane, and soon a light from a casement came full in view. Little Sue looked up in hope. "Here we are," said the man.

He gave a whistle, and a light moved through the open door of the cottage now in sight. A glow of ruddy hue was seen through the door, and a woman hastened with a light to the low garden stile. She stood in silence a moment, seeing her husband and the lad with a hurdle borne between them; then, before she could inquire, that cheery voice said, 'All's right; we have only brought you some poor folk and a dog, dead in saving a child; but you'll fetch him back again, I know, before long." The wife meanwhile in silence had lifted out the movable stile, and held the light lower, by way of guiding them in.

"Here, I say," said the lad, "give this poor man a hand, mother; he is blind, and there is a child, too. If you would blow out the candle, you'd see."

"I can see," said the woman. "Here, sir, take my hand. You poor little thing! we'll soon get you in;" and little Sue looked up to the dear face of compassion above her.

Within the cottage a bright fire burned on the hearth, a white cloth covered the table, and supper was set. The cottage-room looked more beautiful to poor little Sue than any room she had ever seen before. It was of a good size, with bright furniture round, a rug before the fire, and little stools in the chimney-corner.

"Here's a seat," said the woman, leading the blind man to a high-backed arm-chair that stood close by the fire. She sat little Sue on a stool beside it, and turned to the dog.

"Why, he's soaking wet! Bring him here to the fire. Has he been in the river?"

"Yes," answered the lad; "he saved the child at the Grange by a more desperate swim than ever I saw, and brought the drowning babe with such a struggle to land as left him spent for his pains."

"Lay him here," said the woman; "warmth will help him the best, when we can get it inside and out. I'll get you some flannel, Michael, and you give him a rub."

"Now, if that isn't just the thing," said the lad, "I was right certain you'd know, or I would never have had a hand to carry him off from the Grange, for my master, I know well enough, what a fatigue he will be in when he finds they are gone."

"He should have sent and seen to that sooner," said the first man. "If I had not passed, and Nep found them out, they would all have been the wrong side of help pretty near by this time, left belated there in the terrible fog."

"How came you by the river?" inquired his wife.

"I went to the Grange," replied the man, "to look after some sheep we have out to feed there. I was afraid the rains of last night might have done them some hurt; so you see it was ordered I should be passing that way. The fog was so thick I should never have seen them squatted there on the ground. I had need of both eyes to keep clear of the river in crossing the bridge. But Nep found them, and

barked when I called, all the same as he would if he had found a sheep out in trouble."

"Does he dry up at all?" asked the woman of Michael.

"He feels me rubbing, and likes it well, and that's something," said the lad.

"Well, you keep on, not too hard, — he hasn't strength to bear much. I'll make him a posset as soon as I have seen to the child."

She reached a hand to little Sue, untied her bonnet, took off her cloak, and when she saw the fair little face, with its sad, tired look, she gave it a kiss, and said, "We shall save the poor dog! But how wet you are! Was all that the fog?"

"I can tell," said Michael; "the dog would not come out our side, though we 'ticed him all we could; he made for the other, and she ran to the river brink, and he scrambled out where she stood; he laid the child at her feet, and she got its head on her knee, and her arms about it, all the same as if she had been as wise as the old, and had the knowledge that she ought to hold up the head of the drowned. I ran off at that to let my mistress know, for I was the far side of the river, you see."

"Sit a minute by the fire," said the woman, "while I make the posset; the dog must not wait longer, and I don't think you'll hurt there."

"No, thank you kindly," said Benjamin Tovel; "this is life from the dead!"

It was pleasant to see the poor dog by the fire, the strong, kindly hands rubbing dry his wet coat. The woman now hasted and made a posset for Sharp. It was made of hot milk and treacle, and whatever else might be right; it did not take long preparing. and she gave it to Michael.

"He wont drink," said the lad.

"But he must," said the woman; "give it here to me." Then, taking a spoon, she knelt down by the dog as one used to tend sick creatures, which Sharp had sense left to know. He soon swallowed the posset, and she laid his head down again, "There, now let him rest; I wouldn't rub any more."

"Then I'll be off now, because of letting master know."

"Now, Michael, if the fog lie as heavy as you say, it is not fit you should go by that swollen river to-night."

"O mother, don't I know every foot of the way? and I wont take the plank, but go round by the bridge."

"There and back again; it isn't safe, Michael, I say."

"Well, then I will stay on at master's to-night; he'll be glad enough I should, if I take him good news. You don't see fear for the dog now, I suppose, mother, — do you?" And Michael returned to take one more look at Sharp, and as he stroked him down, the dog gave a weak wag of his tail. "There's

a good fellow, now; that was meant as answer to me, just to say he should live. I shall go freely for that. He's a fine old fellow, isn't he? If you had but seen him, — what a leap he did give, right into the river's midst; and then, when he turned, how he did breast the stream! Well, good-night, old fellow; I'll have another rub to-morrow. Good-night, mother; and you, sir, and you, little dear. You will be all right by the morning, I am sure, resting here."

"I will look round now," said the husband, "and settle Nep in, and do what's wanted outside, then I shall not have to turn out again. Is Nep's supper ready?"

"Yes, you will find it all ready." And the man went out to see all well around.

Then the woman said to the child, —

"Now I must put some dry clothing on you." And going upstairs she came presently back with a complete little set of child's clothes in her hand. "I must warm these," she said, "for they have been lying by." She held them to the fire, then took little Sue and clothed her in such garments as she had never worn before, so good and so pretty. Little Sue looked down in surprise, then up at that kind face, and saw a sadness upon it; but the woman smiled at her, then smoothed the child's clustering hair, and longed in her heart that the blind father could look on his child as she sat by his side. And she said to him, "I wish I could help you to dry clothing as well as the child."

"There's no need for that," said the blind man; "I have been used to all weathers. I once was a shepherd, and my fathers before me."

"Are you then," said the woman, "that shepherd that served Farmer Deeks, and had the fever so bad?"

"Yes, I am," answered the blind man. "That rough wave is past and gone, and this, which seemed like to come over as heavy, has broken in blessings upon us."

"God grant it may," said the woman. "I have often thought of you. And is that the child that had to bide in the work-house?"

"Yes, — my little Sue," said the blind man, and little Sue looked up at her father.

"I only heard of all your troubles long after," said the woman; "but if I had known at the time; I always felt I would have taken the motherless babe, and trusted by proper care to keep my own from infection."

"Then you be blessed with children?" said Benjamin Tovel.

"Yes, indeed I am."

But at this moment the husband came in.

"Well, it 's all right for the night, and we all want our supper, I guess. Don't you, my poor child? But you don't look poor now. Is that the mother that has made you so tidy?" And he looked on he child, then at his wife, who met his look through

a tear that filled her eyes, and he said, "Sure I know those little clothes." And she answered, —

"Yes; but the child is worthy of them. Did you ever see such a fair little face?" And he answered,—

"'Tis a blessing to have saved her!" Then, aloud, "Now then let us sup."

At supper the woman told her husband who their visitor was; and he was greatly struck, saying how often he had thought of the trouble on him; it made him twice over thankful that he had been sent there, to save him.

Before they sat down to supper the husband gave thanks for the food then before them, and the deliverance that had been given. And now at supper the strangers soon became as friends, united by that love, which though new is yet old, and when it kindles responsively in those but now met, reveals the tie of a brotherhood that had existed unknown, and will abide without end.

Little Sue had her supper of hot bread and milk; and, unused to take anything without giving Sharp some, she left her little stool and got down on the floor, close by Sharp. The woman watched her, but said nothing. Then the child took a piece of soaked bread in her fingers, and gave it to the dog, who took it from her, and swallowed it; and she looked up with a face all beaming in joy, saying, —

"He did eat! — He did eat! Daddy, wont he live now?"

"Yes, I think he is doing well," said that kind woman's voice; "it was the best sign he could give, eating your bread." Then the child went on feeding him, and the dog took all she gave.

"There now," said the woman, "can you eat bread and butter? Because we can't feed the dog, and send you hungry to bed. We will try him with some more milk to-night. You sit here, and eat this." So little Sue sat quite content by that good woman's side, and finished her tea, with her eyes growing sleepy.

"I fear," said Benjamin Tovel, "I ought to have had more thought for the night. It will put you out sadly to have us sleeping here."

"Not that," said the woman, "if you can sleep in that chair. I have no bedroom ready, and the chair may be as well. I can make up a little bed for the child on the floor."

"I am sure," said Benjamin Tovel, "this is such comfort as we are not used to. I have not had such a feeling since I sat by my own hearth, when my Susan was living, and I had my sight."

"That's pleasant hearing, I am sure," said the man; 'I think we had better go betimes to rest to-night, for the poor child's tired out."

"Don't let us put you out of your way," said the blind man; "she will sleep on my knee. Here, little one, come and get a sleep with me."

"Let's we sing first, Daddy," said the child.

"Do you sing?" asked the woman; and little Sue

made an effort to answer, and said, in her own peculiar forms of speech, —

"When we has had we teas, we sings we hymns."

The woman smiled on her in that motherly love that the child that remembers not its own mother's tenderness, yet truly feels.

"Will you sing with the child?" the woman asked of the blind man.

"Then I think we must say our psalm first," he replied; and, verse by verse with little Sue he repeated, "The Lord is my Shepherd;" and when could its blessed record of a love passing knowledge have come home with more power to those gathered there? Then the child sang with her father, her clear little voice rippling on by the deeper cadence of his: —

"Commit thou all thy griefs,
And ways into His hands;
To his sure truth and tender care,
Who earth and heaven commands;

"Who points the clouds their course,
Whom winds and seas obey:
He shall direct thy wandering feet,
He shall prepare thy way.

"Put thou thy trust in God,
In duty's path go on;
Fix on his Word thy steadfast eye,
So shall thy work be done.

"No profit canst thou gain
By self-consuming care,
To him commend thy cause; his ear
Attends the softest prayer.

"Give to the winds thy fears,
Hope and be undismayed;
God hears thy sighs, and counts thy tears, —
God shall lift up thy head.

"Through waves, and clouds, and storms,
He gently clears thy way;
Wait thou his time, thy darkest night
Shall end in brightest day."

The woman and her husband both felt the hymn greatly, and she said to the child, "You will sing some day in heaven;" for a feeling came over her from the first as if the child were not long for this earth.

"With the angels," answered little Sue, who considered the blessed hope as beyond any doubt.

"Will you take our evening prayer?" the man asked of Benjamin Tovel. "I am sure you are able to do that without the sight of your eyes."

"I am spent in body and mind to-night, I fear," said the blind man; "and to be a silent worshipper is the best help for me." So the man led the evening prayer from a book well worn with long use. Then wishing the father and child "one of the best of good-nights," he went to his upper room, when he had first brought down a little flock bed for Sue.

This was made up beside her father; but before she would go to her little bed, she knelt at her father's knees, and offered, in her own words, her thanksgiving and prayer, — and not knowing by what name to call the good woman, she said, "Bless the kind mammy here, and the kind man who did bring we safe home, and let poor Sharp live and be quite well;" and adding her other petitions, she ended her infant prayer, and, laid to rest by the woman, dropped at once off to sleep.

Sharp drunk up some milk, the fire was then made up, a blanket given to the blind man, and the woman left them for the night.

When the woman went to her room, she said to her husband, 'How heavenly it was to hear them sing! I say, wasn't it, Jem?"

And he answered, "Yes, lovely. I don't know how I feel, but it comes to me almost as if Old Willy were back; and to think of them perishing there in the fog by the cold river bed, and the dog dying too! But that's all over now, and we are blessed in the saving them."

"Oh, but that child!" said the woman; "she's got safe in my heart. She's almost like our own little Peace come back to us again. I couldn't help dressing her up in our pretty one's clothes; and how sweet she did look in them, — didn't she, Jem?"

"Yes, I do say it's all over a comfort," he answered.

And so it was with Jem and with Patience, his

wife, that the blind man and his child had found their happy refuge. It was in Old Willy's chair Benjamin Tovel now slept, and under the roof still held sacred to him. No wonder that their sleep was sweet to them.

CHAPTER XII.

JEM and Patience rose early. Patience always gave her husband his breakfast before he started for work. She was a good wife to him, and made his home his delight. She always looked after him when he left the door, and prayed in her heart for his safe return; for she said, "We can never tell what may happen to hurt the body or the soul between the dawn and the night." On this next morning, hastening down first, with her candle, she saw that the poor dog had changed his posture. "He will live, now," she said. "O Jem, he will live!"

"I knew he would," said Jem, as he hurried in to look at him.

"That's more than I did," replied Patience; "I thought the hope was but small."

"You don't know how to value the skill you have been trained to," said her husband, with some pride of feeling.

'O Jem!" said the gentle, reproving voice of his wife.

"I know," he replied, "'tis no merit of ours, but a healing gift from above"

"How have you slept, sir?" said Patience; "we seem all for the dog."

"Never better in my life," answered Benjamin Tovel; "it was wholly a night of comfort."

"I knew there was rest in that chair,' said Jem; "one sat there for years whose life was a blessing. The very chair seems to speak of goodness to me."

"God showeth mercy to thousands in them that love him," the blind man replied; "and so the peace of him you speak of breathes in this house for many."

"I shall find you here," said Jem, "when I come home to-night. The dog cannot travel yet. How nicely the child lies sleeping there! You wont be long without breakfast, I have to start early; we always have a short morning prayer, and I shall take it a comfort to have you offer it." They knelt, and the blind man prayed.

"Father of mercies and God of all comfort; we humbly thank thee for the goodness and mercy that has followed us all the days of our life, and for our safety and rest in the night that is past. Let thy tender mercies come unto us this day, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word. Cause us to hear thy loving-kindness this morning, and to know the way wherein we should walk, for we lift up our soul unto thee. Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and may many this day be turned to righteousness. Remember for good these thy ser-

vants, who for thy name's sake have ministered and yet do minister to the poor and needy, that their reward may be great. Cleanse us from all sin and evil, and enable us to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, that when he who is our life shall appear, we may appear with him in glory. Bless the children of thy servants, and may they live in thy sight. Let the precious blood of our Redeemer, and the robe of his righteousness cover us in thy presence this day, and may the Spirit of truth lead us into all truth, and take of the things that are our Lord Jesus Christ's, and show them unto us. We beseech thee to bless us and to make us a blessing, according to the word upon which thou hast caused us to hope. We beseech thee to supply all our need this day, out of the riches of thy grace which is in Christ Jesus. Receive and accept us in him our merciful Saviour, who hath taught us when we pray to say, 'Our Father which art in heaven; hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.'"

Jem and Patience breathed a hearty "Amen." Then, with a warm grasp of the hand of his blind guest, Jem hastened off to his work.

Patience now began to prepare for the day, her first work was the milking her cow. Then she came in with milk for the dog, which he lapped up with pleasure, looking up, as Patience said, so grateful, that he wanted not words. Then, when Patience asked him, he rose on his feet and moved from the fire, which she wanted to clean up and light. Sharp walked to the little bed on the floor, where the tired child lay sleeping, stood looking at her a few minutes, then lay down at its foot; he still looked exhausted and tired, but it was plain now he would live. The fire soon crackled and blazed, the room was swept clean, and the furniture dusted. All done in that quiet, pleasant way, which seemed like a dream to the blind man, for it brought back the remembrance of his own wife and of home. Patience did her work in silence; she was a woman of few words, but those few made a greater impression than many; for when she did speak, it was always something you were glad to have said. Jem would say of his wife, "If you don't pick up her words when she drops them, you may go far for any others so good, and I can promise she wont give you many." Oh, the rest of that arm-chair to the poor wayfaring man, with this sweet sense of home around him again, not obliged to do all things himself in his blindness and in his poor little place with nothing hardly to use, and fearing for little Sue when she tried to work, for he still seemed to think

of her almost as the infant child she was when his eyes last rested on that sweet little face. But no repining mingled in his feeling, he only gave silent thanks that he was once more within shelter of a blessed home, such as once was his own.

"Why, you are not helpless!" said Patience, as the blind man came in from his favorite stream of cold water at the pump.

"The air feels healthy and dry," said Benjamin Tovel; "I think the day will be fine."

"Now the kettle boils," said Patience, "and we will breakfast in quiet before I wake up my children. We had best let your dear child sleep on. She looks lovely there on the pillow; there's a bloom on her cheek, and her blue eyes not quite shut, and her little fair curls round her head, and a dear smile on her lips."

There was a most touching expression on the face of the blind man as he listened to this description of his child. "Bless you for those words," he said, "you have given me a picture that my dark eyes can look on. None ever told me before that the little one was so fair to see. She'll be like her mother! I pray that she may in her words and ways. I do catch the dear tones of her mother's own voice at times when the child is speaking to any."

After breakfast Patience cleared away all from the table to her little back kitchen, built on behind,

then hastened to dress her children, and came down with a boy of two years old in her arms, and little Alice of four. Peace, her first-born child, had not long before left her earthly home for a heavenly, and her mother wept for her still. It was in some of the treasured-up garments, Peace needed no more, that the mother had clad little Sue. The children at first looked much surprised at all, and Alice clung to her mother, but little Willy, — for Jem would call his first son by that name of dear memory and sacred to him, — little Willy soon crawled up to Sharp, where he lay near the sleeping child, and began to pat him, and put his arm round his neck, as he was accustomed to do with their own great dog Nep. Patience saw that the dog seemed well pleased with the child, and let him play on, as thinking it good for the dog to be gently roused to take notice of something fresh. Patience led little Alice to the small bed on the floor where the tired child still slept; she looked a moment, then jumped at her mother's side, saying, "Sissy, sissy!" supposing it to be her little sister Peace come back again. A tear dimmed the mother's eye, but she said nothing, and led her away.

There was much more animation now in the room and little Sue awoke. Patience gave her little son to Benjamin Tovel, saying, "Will you take him while I dress the dear child? He will be ready enough if you talk to him a little."

Benjamin Tovel held out his arms, cheered to feel

himself called to be a nursing father again. And Patience carried the little stranger-child upstairs in her arms, she was so light and small. It reminded her how often she had carried her own little Peace; and it soothed the mother's heart to dress so fair a child in the little wardrobe she had thought to wait years before using again. When prepared for the day, little Sue asked of Patience, "What mammy are you?" Patience did not quite understand at first, and the child said, "There is my own mammy in heaven, and Sammy's mammy by home; what mammy are you?"

"Mammy Patience," she answered; for she felt it would be dear to hear her own name again from the lips of a child.

Little Sue looked thoughtful a moment, then said, "Mammy Patience, shall we say we prayers?"

Patience answered "Yes;" and she sat beside the child, while, in broken sentences, she offered her morning thanksgiving and supplication to Heaven.

Then, leading her down, Patience found her little Alice at the blind man's knee, and both her children in fixed attention to the story of the dove that Noah took into the ark.

"I have brought down the little dove," Patience said; "glad enough I am that this is the ark that has taken her in!" The blind man smiled a long-forgotten smile; for, though a look of serenest peace was impressed on his face, it was long since a smile

had kindled upon it; none remembered to have seen it since the grave closed on his home. But, amidst the unlooked-for trials of this journey, a life and light had been brightening over all that before wore only the aspect of sadness.

Little Sue had made a third listener at her blind father's knee, and now the sweet story ended, though the children still looked up in expectation. Patience called them to breakfast, for their brimming basins of bread and milk were all ready. To their great delight, Sharp finished what was left for him in the basin of each; and, though he could not stand long, he had walked to them for it.

"A little and often, is best for him to-day," said Patience; "to-morrow we must manage to get him a bone."

They were now the happiest party that could possibly be. Little Alice called Sue "Sissy," and Sue called her Ali; the little Willy she called "Baby-boy." Patience found she had, in the blind man, a most beguiling nurse. The children seemed to understand that he wanted their care; little Willy stroked his face, and Alice led him out to walk and sit in the garden with her; while little Sue was most often by the side of Patience, who loved to feel her there, and spent many looks on her young face that day. There was a grave tenderness in Patience that won the child; and Patience brought out for her some of the books last used by little Peace. A mother-

less child from Ivy Lane had a double interest for her, recalling as it did to her the days of her childhood, so long passed away.

When the early stir of the morning was over, Patience sat down to her needle, and little Sue sat on a stool by her side; and Patience listened to her stories of her home, of Sammy, and Mammy Garson and Rachel, and the gentleman who brought her her new boots on market-day, and the red socks that came in a parcel. Benjamin Tovel was seated on the bench outside, — the same bench that old Willy had sat on long before, beneath the clustering leaves of the vine, and the roses that lingered still blooming around. Little Willy was on his knee. Alice had taken her stool by his side, charmed to have the companionship of some one not busy, who listened, answering kindly to her in expressible thoughts. Her infant sympathies were strong by nature; she was the child of parents who had nurtured compassion. Her attentions charmed the blind man; his love for children was great, and they solaced him now.

When little Sue had ended her tales of Ivy Lane, full of a special interest to Patience, whose first memories lay there, she waited silent awhile. Patience, too, was silent; it was her habit to be so; and her thoughts had been led back by the child to her own sadder memories of home. At length little Sue seemed to suppose that it rested with her

to make the time pleasant, and she said, "Shall w
tell the story Daddy tells in the church-yard?"

"Yes," said Patience; "tell me."

"It is all about the tomb in the rock, and ot
Saviour, who rose from the dead, and the gre
mighty angel came down, all shining and white. I
you know about that?"

"I have heard it," said Patience, "but you te
me again."

"Then we'll tell it," said little Sue, who seeme
not to know that there was such a word as "I," «
as "me." The story was told as a child only cou
tell it; and as the mother sat and listened, the resu
rection glory beamed bright on her soul, gently hea
ing the wound the buried form of little Peace ha
left in her heart.

While this happy converse was spending the fre
autumn morning, a light cart drove up, and th
young man sprang out who crossed the river by th
bridge when the rescued child was laid on the gras
He was once the little Benjamin, who had helpe
his elder brothers and his young master to pile u
old Willy's fire. His father, now in old age, wa
the head game-keeper still; the eldest son had bee
trained in the stables at the Hall, and was coachma
now, as the aged Jenks had retired; the second wa
under his father, the third worked at the Hall, an
Benjamin, who had grown up in rather unsettle
ways (being the youngest, he had been a spoilt chil

it was said), had now let himself as farm-man in the house at the Grange. Mr. Burton was pleased to have the son of a family so respectable, and said if the young man were steady, and willing to learn, he would do his part to help him on in the work that belonged to a farm. Crossing the style, he stood before Benjamin Tovel, and said, "I think you are the travelling man whose dog saved the child at the Grange?"

"Yes," replied Benjamin Tovel. "Is it well with the child?"

"Well enough," answered the man; "they say she is getting all right as fast as she can, and if you please you must come now with me; we were hunting you up in all places last night."

"Did you look in the meadow by the river?" asked the blind man, wishing to know whether other help would have come, or whether, as he believed, they owed their preservation to Jem and his dog.

"No," said the man; "we never thought you would be there. No one knew you were blind, nor the dog spent like that. Both my master and mistress were terribly cut up when they heard about it. They sent me off here; master said I was to take you all back with me, and he would see to the dog."

Patience had come to the door, hearing a man talking there, and little Sue clung to her hand.

"Take back my best duty and humble thanks to

your master," said Benjamin Tovel, "and say I a thankful to God for the saved life of his child; a we were found by friends, who have done all for t and if the dog can walk by to-morrow I hope to rea home."

"You don't mean to say you are not going wi me?"

"I have set my face for home," said Benjam Tovel, "and I cannot turn back again on my way."

"Think better of it," said the man; "you wi anger my master, and that will be to your hurt, f of course he means a reward! Why, you mig make your fortune! I heard him say he would gi any price for that dog, and they do say he is t richest of all the farming gentry of the county."

"Riches are of little use to me," said the blin man, "and no money could tempt me to part wit the dog."

"Well, I should say of all folks a blind ma ought not to stand in his own light!"

This was said in a tone that kindled the displea ure of Patience. She now spoke, saying, "I ca have no uncivil words given here. If you hav the feeling of a man, you will be ashamed of tho you have now spoken."

"Be not angry for my sake!" said the blind ma "See ye not that the poor lad has never felt mi fortune? God shield him from trouble and the har words it brings!"

"There, don't say a word more," said the young man, in a very different tone; "I am sorry I spoke so, if you will believe me, and I'll do all that ever I can if you will come back with me. I promise I will," he said, looking at Patience. "You see if you don't, master will think it's my fault.

"It's no use your persuading," said Patience, kindly; "you may see that firm word never changes! My husband found them, and will not give them up while they can bide with us; and if the dog isn't quiet it may go bad with him yet."

"May I just have a look at him?" asked the young man. "I never saw such a leap as he gave, right into the middle of the stream, and how bravely he bore down when we cheered him on! I was sent about here and there for the doctor, who never can be found when he's wanted the most, or I should have gone after them, you may be sure." Then turning to Benjamin Tovel, he said, —

"Well, good-day, master, then. Give me a shake of your hand if I must go back alone."

"God bless you!" said the blind man. And the young man turned away with a deeper feeling than he had had for long.

After this Benjamin Tovel came within doors, and sat again in Old Willey's arm-chair, turned by Patience to meet the pleasant air from the door, where a chaffinch and robin hopped freely about, the children scattering crumbs; their shout of joy was music

itself, as the song of a bird; and to little Sue, used to town sights, all this gladness of village life constrained her to look on in silent delight.

The two children now went to their morning sleep.

"I keep them to that," Patience said; "it saves them from tire and the cross ways that come with it, and so helps their temper from getting fretted, I find."

Sue was now busy with the little books on her knee, and Benjamin Tovel and Patience fell into discourse. They had both trodden the pathway of trial, and eaten the bread of affliction; they had both been tried in that furnace that purifies the gold of true faith from the dross that dims its pure lustre. They both knew and loved the Hand that they leaned on, and felt their only dependence to be on its heavenly grace. They held such discourse as Patience could never have with any one except her mistress, Mrs. Smith, of the farm. Not but what Jem was one of the best of husbands, and kindest-hearted of men, and he had a principle above this world; but life had always been a pleasant pathway of well-requited labor for him. He had wept for his dear aged mother, and again for his child, little Peace, but he had never known adversity, — the long pressure of that "heavy Hand," of which the Psalmist speaks, which does not break the spirit, but bows it down in humble submission and lowly waiting on God, while it is softened into tenderness not

of this earth, by the all-consoling love that such trial needs. Patience and Jem were both happy as could be in the blessing of their home, but the one far in advance of the other in the life divine, because more deeply taught in the school of that divine Master, of whom it has been said, "He never yet turned a bad scholar out of his school." Yet both had learned according to the ability given, and the Providence educating both; they were alike happy in a higher life than their own, and blessed in the hope that reveals heaven as the final home of each one led by love divine here.

But now another visitor stepped over the stile, William Smith, from the farm. As he came in at the open door, he looked with a kindly recognition at little Sue, and said, —

"So it is as I thought, my friends from the town! Mr. Tovel, your dog is all the talk of the country. What a good Providence it was that led you that way!"

"We did come in the new boots and socks too," said little Sue, looking down at her feet; "and they be all tidy still."

William smiled at Patience, who, having heard the story, now guessed all at once; then, taking the hand of the blind man, he said, —

"You are happy, my good friend, to have been the means of saving the life of that little child. Why, I did not think my next call would have been

on you here; you know I promised not to make it a long day!"

"No, sir; I always turned off short of this village in my rounds; but it seems I was to blame in slighting it so!" And again that long-forgotten smile passed over the face of the blind man.

"I think so," said William. "But you have come in earnest now, to wake us all up to hear all we can. They say our shepherd Jem saved you last night in the fog."

"They say true, then. We must all have perished there, if it had not been for him and his dog!"

"There are some people," said William, "who always seem at hand when they are wanted, and Jem's been one of that sort ever since I have known him."

"The greater comfort for him," said Patience; "I am sure he thinks so."

Then William stooped to notice the dog.

"We heard of it last night," he said; "Michael called round by us on his way home; he seemed too full of it all to wait the next day. I was for running down here at once, you may be sure, but mother said, "Now just let well alone, if you can: the dog can never do better if Patience has him in hand; don't you interfere." I sat down like a good child, as I always do for my mother, but I said, I only thought you might stand in want of some help. Mother answered to that, "You know very well

Patience can do more without help than other people can with it." For when my mother has a good opinion of any one, she always will believe all the world must hold with her. However, it was quite another thing when she found I was coming to-day. She went to her larder and put up these bones, for she said you might not have bones, and if he could eat to-day, there was nothing so strengthening. Look here, you brave old fellow," said William to the dog, unfolding his parcel. Sharp knew, far off, the scent of a bone, and wagged his tail when a bone, too well covered with meat for any but a dog so heroic, came in sight. But when given him, he laid it down, and turned away; he could not eat it. "Never mind," said William, "he will try at it to-morrow; I see he is coming round; there is notice in his eye."

"Will you come and see my mother?" said William to the child. "I have a sister at home who will be so kind to you!"

Little Sue took fast hold of Patience's gown, then curtsied, and said, "No; thank you."

William laughed, and rose to go, saying, —

"O Patience, 'tis the old story still, — you steal all the chidren."

CHAPTER XIII.

"SHALL I bring old Nep in?" said Jem, as he opened his cottage door on his return in the evening.

"No, you had better not," answered Patience. "The dog is weakly still, and it might put him about to have our dog let in."

So they sat down to supper again; the same quiet party, only each felt more at home with the others than they had done the evening before. Just as supper was over Michael looked in and asked, "How does the dog do to-day?"

"He picks up good tightly," said Jem, "and will be pert by to-morrow. My missus keeps him quiet; that's her way with sick folk."

"How sensible he looks, don't he?" said Michael; "he turned an eye upon me all the same as a friend. Do you hold pretty middling, sir?" he asked of Benjamin Tovel, "and the little lass sprightly again? How my master did take on last night to be sure; when he heard of you perishing there in the fog, he turned almost as white as he did by the river! He was summoned for a jury to-day, but he said he

should send off the first thing this morning for you, and my mistress laid it to heart that you wouldn't go. My master wasn't home when I came away. Now, I declare, that dog remembers my rubs of his wet coat yester evening; he has laid him down on his side, and is looking on me as if he thought I was made for nothing else but a rubber. Here, mother, just hand me the flannel again."

"It hangs on the copper-hole," said Patience; "but, Michael, 'tis your night-school to-day."

"Didn't I just know you would say that, and if you hadn't I would? But could I stand out against the dog when he wanted me first? Now, old boy, I can only rub one five minutes by the clock. We are going to read the chapter this evening on Daniel in the den. We are all upon the beasts in the Bible just now, and a talk upon lions is to turn up to-night, with some pictures to set the thing out. I am sure they seem beasts better known far off than nigh; to go scrunch in their jaws, what a terrible thing! If I ever had to live out in foreign parts where they bide, I should wish for this brave old dog out and out with me there. I believe he would never be daunted, leastways for you, sir," said the lad, looking up at Benjamin Tovel.

"I am sure he would stand by you to the last, and by any under this roof," answered Benjamin Tovel; "for I never knew him forget a kindness. But I could wish you a better friend to deliver

you out of the mouth of the lion, even the Angel that redeems from all evil."

"I dearly wish it, too," answered Michael the plough-boy; "that's half the meaning why I am always in here, for I truly believe that He bides in this house. There, mother, I am true to my word; I have hung up the rubber; I wish I had not to go though;" and the door shut on Michael, as he left the bright cottage hearth, and went into the darkness singing a carol, and made good speed to the night-school and the "talk upon lions."

"He is a poor, friendless lad," said Jem; "he hired himself as a ploughboy to the Grange, but he lodges in this parish. He used to seem a dull, moping sort of a fellow; but my missus went after seeing to him when he was ill, for the people where he lodges don't think twice upon any one, and since then he is quite another lad; he goes regular to church and the night-school, and gets thoughtful ways for all he is so spirity as you see him now. I said to him one day that I thought they must have physicked his mind and body too, and he said, 'Well, as for that, you may believe me, there's no physic like a good, kind heart that cares for you!' He will always call her 'mother,' and minds her least word like a child; and, if it comes to that, I don't know who doesn't, for with all those quiet ways she is a wonder of a woman for ruling over any."

The discourse was broken in upon by a loud rad

on the door. The blind man started; Sharp gave a half-uttered bark, very expressive of what might follow if occasion required; while Nep without doors made a furious uproar, which proved that the step was that of a stranger. Patience hastened in from the back-kitchen, where she was clearing away, and Jem opened the door. A fine, broad-shouldered yeoman walked in, Farmer Burton of the Grange.

"It is late for a call," he said, as he entered, "and disturbing you, I fear; but I only found on my return home that my good friend I see here had not returned with my man. What! is this the dog?"

Sharp had risen on his feet, and now, as Farmer Burton sat down on Jem's vacant chair, the dog came up to inspect him, little aware that he himself was the object of interest and attention. Very thin and weak the poor dog still looked, and he walked like one strained in every limb. Farmer Burton patted the dog in silence, then took out a large, red silk pocket-handkerchief, and burst into tears. Benjamin Tovel heard the sob of the strong man, and his heart melted within him; he felt how dear to that father was the life of that child; dear as his own little Sue's was to him; and, touched with the electric cord of deep sympathy, his own tears found way. Little Sue went to her father's knee, and looked up at him in wondering surprise; had the little child been drowned, she would have seen reason for crying; but finding no explanation, she

found her father's tears, — tears rarely shed now, sufficient reason for hers, and cried too. Jem tur and looked out of the window; though, the ni being dark, there was nothing to see. Patience o used from her childhood to repress all emotion, st calm and quiet, as it was her wont to be. Sh looked all round in serious concern, little aware it had been the sight of himself that first opened springs of sympathy and tears.

Patience drew little Sue to her. The child's excitement had left her painfully sensitive. Pati feared for her, and said gently, "We are not g to cry. It was seeing poor Sharp made the ge man think of his dear little child. We shall l about her presently; wont you like to hear?" L Sue answered "Yes." And the low, quiet w of Patience were heard alike by all, and they composure around. Farmer Burton rose from seat, stroked Sue's curly head, and said, "I'm to be here amongst you all. I came on wit waiting when I found you were not at the Gran

Patience hearing this, took little Sue with and hasted into her little cellar, drew a cork of home-made wine, put some of her plain home-m harvest cake on a plate, and she, with little S her side, brought them in to Mr. Burton, sa "You must stand in need of some food, sir; will please take of this?"

"Thank you, I am sure," said Mr. Burton,

he gladly partook, ate and drank, and was refreshed, for he had driven on without food. "I am sure," he said, "these good friends have done my part for you all, and done it better than I could, by what I can see. I don't wonder you were against leaving them. I owe them at least as great a debt as you can, for if you had perished that night by the river, I am afraid I should never have held up my head again."

"Well, sir, it was the same good hand of our God upon us, that ordered life for your child, and safety for us. What, does she mend nicely? as well as you could think for?"

"Yes, better than any could suppose, so far gone as she was; her life hung in doubt until we almost gave up hope, and it was this anxiety kept us so long unmindful of you."

"I think, sir," said Jem, "it was all ordered for the best; for the dog would soon have been gone if he had not had all attention to bring life back again. And what with the child, and your care for her, which must needs have stood first, I thing the dog would have been lost if he had not been here."

"I fear so," said Farmer Burton, "and must be always thankful to you for doing what I perhaps could not have done; but now I must have them up to the Grange."

"Thank you, sir," said Benjamin Tovel; "it is no will to stand out against your kindness in asking, but I must turn for home."

"You can turn your face for home as easily from the Grange as from here. We will forward you anywhere."

"It is not the miles I dread, sir, but the changes that come. They have been great for me and my child; and we not being over strong, it is more than the mind can well carry. This blessed roof has saved us, and when we go hence I crave after home."

"When you go, then, you must let me know, and my man shall drive you all home in the light cart."

"Thank you, sir, the same, but we shall take the road easy. The dog will travel our pace. I doubt the ride suiting the child. If you please, sir, we will just keep our own quiet ways, for they call no notice from any; and we be all built up bravely by the kind cheer we have here."

"You refuse all I ask," said Farmer Burton, "and what can I say to my wife? She is bent upon seeing you?"

"I hope no offence, sir; I am sure I mean none, for you have behaved like a gentleman in such kind offers to us; but if the lady should be any day in the town, and would condescend to call upon us, we should feel it a great favor. We live in Ivy Lane, the lower end house, with a basket hung out; and you will please make my humblest duty to the lady, sir, and say that while the blind man lives on earth he will daily pray that the blessing of the Almighty

may rest on the child, to guard her from all evil, and to fill her life with 'his love.'"

"Well, my friend, I shall remember your words, and often tell my poor little darling of the prayer you are so good as to say you shall offer for her. I am sure life needs prayer, with such unforeseen evils."

"And such unforeseen blessings, too, sir, we may as truly say. The comfort of this house has been far more to us, I am sure, than the short misery we were in, in the damp river fog; and you may yet live to find that the dear child's after life gathers its deepest blessing out of the dark river bed."

"How so?" asked Mr. Burton.

"By its minding her, sir, of the love of Him who preserved her; for sure we cannot say, let the means be what they might, but that they were under the control of him who brought them to bear; and if she do but grow up to feel that, why, then she will be thinking how best to order her life in all things to please him; and that is holiness; and you know, sir, 'tis written, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.'"

"Well, I can't say I have ever understood these things, but I thought holiness was to be better than your neighbors, and I felt shy of that."

"No, sir; holiness lies in the spirit of a man, and has its concernment with God, to do all things unto him, and fashioned after his will. And for certain

he that has most of this will be the lowest in his own eyes, for he will see how far off he is from the thing that he strives after."

"I wish we could hold this discourse longer," said Farmer Burton, "but the night draws on apace. Did you say you were a basket-maker by trade?"

"Yes, sir; Sue, show the gentleman one. My work is strong, and I don't hear but what it wears well. If the lady should be wanting any I should count it a favor to serve her."

Little Sue had lost sight of the baskets for the first time in her life, but Patience fetched them quickly, and took them one from another.

"Good work, I can see," said Farmer Burton, "and will just please my wife. Are these what you had with you that night by the river?"

"Yes, sir; I have not been about to sell any since."

"Then let me take them all. What is the price? My wife will set store by them, you may be sure."

"I can sell you two, sir, and be thankful; I did want the third; they are all alike and the price alike, half-a-crown."

The price was paid down, five shillings for the two, and little Sue's eyes glistened with pleasure. Well she knew what it was to her father to sell at a fair price the work he had toiled on.

"Good-night then, my friend. God bless and preserve you! You must take this little offering from

me. I could not offer to buy the dog, for that would be robbing you of a friend money could not replace; but this will help you to keep him and your child, too, I hope;" and Mr. Burton put a purse into the hand of Benjamin Tovel.

"There be no thanks nor reward due to me, sir," said Benjamin Tovel; 'tis the merciful Creator gives the creatures their nature; but I humbly thank you for your bounty to me, and may He, who is able, reward and repay you!"

Sweet was the evening worship beneath that lowly roof, where those, so lately unknown to each other met united in heart, and true friends for the future.

When little Sue was brought downstairs by Patience, ready for her little bed on the floor by her father, and laid there and asleep, Benjamin Tovel put the purse on the table given him by Mr. Burton. "I don't know what is in it," he said; "'tis a rich gift, I fear; but the least I can do is to share it with you. You truly saved us, and a great deliverance it was!"

"Not a farthing," said Jem; "this is no inn for you, but the house of a friend, where you must come whenever you will, and always be welcome."

"Nay, master," said the blind man, "believe me the half would be sweeter if I had shared it with you. Don't I owe you the life of my child, and my dog, and my own life, too?"

"And sure," said Jem, "you can't grudge us the

blessing of that! There, never say a word more on such matters as these. Why, you have brought my wife to crying, who never will shed a tear. I often wish, for my part, when troubles are on us, which is seldom enough, she would fall a-crying, for I think that quiet way wears out the strength more, and I never do know how to comfort those still troubles within; they get the master of me. I like a good cry that brings it all out."

Patience, once overcome, could not readily recover, and slipped away to her chamber.

"She's gone off," said Jem; "'tis your going she takes on about. She is so wonderful fond of the child; it minds her of the one we have lost. But she is that fond of you all that I shall have enough to do to keep her spirit up, I can see, when you are gone."

"I am afraid," said the blind man, "if I did bide here for long I should be sore loth to go, and my little Sue too. It will come back to me now like a heavenly dream. Would you just be so good as to keep that one basket for her with the love and the blessing of the blind man and his poor little child? I had it with me when you saved us from the brink of the river; it will mind her of that, and she will find the work good.'

"I will," said Jem; "it will be something to give her when I have to cheer her up for the parting with you. But you must stay one day longer; the dog cannot walk till he has fed better."

"I will then," said Benjamin Tovel, "for your goodness kindles a wonderful comfort on my darkened way, though I may say 'tis only earth lies in shade."

When the poor women came the next morning to buy milk, as they did daily, — for the milk of the fine cow, Mrs. Smith's gift to Patience, was in great request,— they each one begged just to see the dog, for they had heard by this time of all that had passed. Patience let them step in, and saw their motherly looks on little Sue, and sympathy for her blind father; then they turned away, greatly satisfied at having seen the dog, and the poor man, and the child. Sharp, too, was recovering, and did not turn from his good supply of bones. William Smith looked in again and was surprised at the greater spirit about the dog altogether. But happy hours will fly swiftly; they have something in them of heaven, where they say that time is not, because its soft wing flies unnoted by all; while sorrow hangs its chain on the swift-footed hours, and makes each moment reckoned by the weight that it bears. So the next morning came at last, and Jem said his heart-felt farewell, and bade them come on their next journey and lodge with them and sell baskets round there. Sharp seemed to understand when Jem wished him well. Nep looked the same wish from under his shaggy brows; he had been allowed the last day to come in when Jem returned in the evening, and showed no ill-will to the stranger dog, but appeared to re-

member all that had passed; and little Sue, to the joy of her young, grateful heart, was allowed to give "the big dog that did save we," — for so she described him, — some of her own bread and milk. She had first fed Sharp, by direction from Patience, that he might not be troubled at her notice of another; but Sharp knew the dog that had been their deliverer, and showed no displeasure at little Sue's grateful attentions to him.

And now breakfast was over. The blind basket-maker had no load to bear; one hand for his child and one for the dog who stood ready. It was plain that little Sue had a full heart at leaving. Patience made her go home in the little garments she had put her on, and the child said, "How glad Mammy Garson will be, and Sammy, and Rachel, these clothes be so tidy! And when daddy is quite hungry or tired, we will come back again, because there is no work to do here, and a warm fire, and plenty food. And when the last leave had been taken and the travellers were out at the stile, little Sue turned back again, and throwing her arms round the neck of that motherly woman, said, "Mammy — Patience!" and then turned again with her hand in her father's, and so they passed away. The child had stopped for a moment between the words, not in the same instant remembering the second; said in this way they bore an unthought-of meaning to Patience; it was as if the child had said at parting, "Mammy, patience!"

She could not tell why she felt so much at parting with them, and especially the child; it was, no doubt, in part, that she stood in the vacant place left by little Peace, and had such sweetness in all her looks and words and ways that it soothed the mother's heart; but it was also a love for the child herself, and little Sue was worthy of the place she had won. But when Patience thought of her, missed her little presence and longed for her near, or feared for her, in Ivy Lane with none beside her blind father and Sharp in the house where she dwelt, she heard again the dear tones of the clinging child, saying, "Mammy, patience." Or when she felt disposed to mourn for her own first-born child, she heard again, "Mammy, patience," and felt how blessed the reunion one day with both children would be. Or when troubles rose to vex her, which yet was but seldom, for Patience had known real trouble in life, and did not vex at trifles nor think little things great; yet when they did come, she still heard the last words of that little voice when the child turned to her again and said, "Mammy, patience."

It was a long walk for one day, and Patience had feared it for them; but the blind man would have his way, and no doubt he was right. The road, too, seemed longer for having no baskets to sell on the way, no houses to call at, or customers to see. They had to rest several times, and to take of the good food packed up by Patience, while Sharp ate with

appetite a bone from Mrs. Smith's larder. At length they entered Ivy Lane, and stopped at Widow Garson's, where the key was always kept. She made them all come in, and, seeing their tired looks, hastened and got ready tea, and made a bright fire, for she said, "There was nothing like warmth for taking out tire." And she said, "Now, don't speak a word until you are a bit rested." The tea was refreshing, and bread and milk to little Sue. Poor Widow Garson could use hospitality now! There was, indeed, much to tell, far more than one evening could unfold; and the tale of the child saved by the dog awakened Widow Garson's deepest feeling. As soon as tea was over, Widow Garson sent Rachel to open the house, and light up a good fire, that it might not strike cold, and see all ready for the night against the tired travellers went in. Little Sue sat by Sammy on their small stools by the fire, where Smut purred in content at the return of absent friends, and poor Sharp lay enjoying the rest and the warmth. Then Benjamin Tovel told Widow Garson of the rich man's kind gift, which he had not mentioned before, and she rejoiced with him a joy words could not express, for none knew their poverty better than she. And he asked her to take one sovereign in charge, — there were five in the purse. Poor Widow Garson had long laid out his small earnings for him. She made them go, he said, twice as far as he could; and now he asked her not to spend much, only what

might help to strengthen the child and the dog, for he did wish to lay up what he could against illness of his own, that there might be support for the child, lest the workhouse should have to receive and part them again. Widow Garson well understood this feeling, and said she would make all spare that she could. "Only now," said Benjamin Tovel, "it will lighten life that you can all come in sometimes, and share a fireside and a cheerful meal with us."

And when, alone with his child in his own little room, he laid up his purse, he felt the joy of gold for her sake, and thought that on better food she now might grow strong and hearty, and he cease to fear for her, and that he might perhaps be able to lean on her, and feel the support when age came upon him, instead of having to tend her frail little life, as now, with such care.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. MANSFIELD had now a large, cheerful family, all brought up at the house of business, — the large, attractive-looking grocer's shop. There were other grocers' shops in the town that made more show than this; but to all, both rich and poor, who knew it by dealing there, Mr. Mansfield's shop had a look of pleasant assurance that the best goods would be served there, at honest prices, and all business done in the best possible way. Two sons now served in the shop; and the excellent foreman with the large family, being no longer wanted, had, with Mr. Mansfield's assistance and encouragement, opened a small shop in another part of the town. The two sons who now served in the shop had their father's pleasant manner, for their parents had trained them to make it their pleasure to do what they did well, and in those obliging and punctual habits which are approved by all.

If, on a market-day, you wished to see the largest gathering of country-women in any one place, except the large market itself, you would find it in Mr. Mansfield's shop; and if you wanted any one poor

woman in particular, you were most likely to hear of her there. Mr. Mansfield knew the names of almost all his customers, and felt an interest about them. It was surprising how soon he learned to know the family history of each. You might have heard him inquire of one poor woman how the old people were? This was a bed-ridden mother and an aged father by the chimney-corner, and sometimes a little tea was sent as a gift to them. Of another, how the little boy Tommy was? And you found that Tommy had been ill for some time, and sometimes a little bit of sugar-candy was screwed up for Tommy. Of another, how the poor neighbor was with the broken leg? And you wondered how Mr. Mansfield could carry in his mind the circumstances of the poor all the country round. But it was not in his mind so much as on his heart that their names and necessities were written; and he had a very large heart, large by nature, and its sympathies were expanding and increasing in power every year.

On market-day, Mrs. Mansfield always held herself in readiness for any poor people whom her husband might send round to call in upon her from the shop. Many a want was cheered or relieved by Mrs. Mansfield's sympathy, aid, or good advice. In the quickly changing dress of the poor women of the present day, it is a pleasure to remember those you might see stepping in or out of Mr. Mansfield's shop. The old women in their little close-fitting bonnets of black,

with short gowns of gay print, and small shawls neatly pinned in summer, or red cloaks in winter; the younger women in their shading bonnets of calico, with the clean lilac print gown and white apron.

Behind the particular counter where Mr. Mansfield generally stood, there was one little shelf with a green curtain before it; but all the poor women knew what lay hidden there, — a little assortment of small books, and cards on which one of his sons who was clever with his pen, had written in printing letters, a text of Holy Scripture, or a short prayer; for the printed cards were not scattered then. And when Mr. Mansfield heard of any one sick, or laid up with accident or some special cause, then he would draw back the little green curtain and take a book or a card from his store; indeed, on market-days it was for the most part kept undrawn. Encouraged by this, the poor women made bold to tell to their town friend all the ills that happened around them; and Mr. Mansfield, fast tied to his shop as he was, became, notwithstanding, a missionary, sending comfort and instruction to many whom he never saw. This little green-curtained shelf was a great attraction to Mr. Mansfield's end of the shop; the largest gathering of the poor people was always waiting there.

But they said, if it had not been for the bits of comfortable books that lay backward there, they would full as soon have been served by Master Joshua, or James, as by the old gentleman himself.

Jane had grown up into a pleasant woman, with all the kindly thoughts for others she might be expected to have. Her father had given her a good education; and her parents thought it best that she should not spend her youth in such occupations as might please her own taste, but turn her ability, both natural and acquired, to useful account in behalf of others. Jane had also younger sisters, who would be made more useful at home if Jane were not always by as their mother's right hand. In compliance with these reasons, she first undertook an engagement as daily governess in the town. This lasted two years with great satisfaction to all; at the end of which time the finishing course she had been desired to give her pupils was considered complete, and Jane Mansfield was at leisure again.

In the midsummer before the time of which we are now writing, another engagement was offered to Jane. This was a long journey from her home, in the neighborhood of a manufacturing town; but being very much pressed by her friends to accept it, her parents consented, and Jane was quite willing to enter upon it. She found herself in a large house, a little way outside the manufacturing town. There were only two children, a girl and a boy, and they were both to be under her care. On her first interview, the lady who had engaged her said, "Now, Miss Mansfield, you must do your own work, remember and not throw the burden on me. I am tired out

with the complaints of governesses; the first thing they do is to bring their troubles to me. I hope, from what I have heard of you, that you understand the work you have undertaken; for mine are clever children, and such always want their own way."

Jane Mansfield listened in silence, as one receiving instructions, merely saying at the conclusion that she would do her best, and hoped to be successful; but, though she did not say so, she could not agree in the lady's conclusions, that because her children were clever, therefore they wanted their own way. She feared it was a proof that they were spoilt and self-willed, rather than any proof that they were naturally clever. They were gone to bed on her arrival, so she did not see them until the next morning.

At breakfast-time a gentle-looking little girl, of eight years old, came into the school-room, and a rosy-faced boy, between six and seven: they stared at their new governess, but took no other notice of her.

"Are you ready for your breakfast?" Miss Mansfield asked; and they came to the table, where a rather dreary confusion of all things soon took place.

Miss Mansfield took no notice of this, but went on quietly with all that seemed to be required; until at length she said, —

"I never breakfasted before in this county, and so I have not seen the habits that prevail here. You will have to teach me your way; and then some

day, if you like, I can show you the way in which people breakfast in my county."

"How do they breakfast?" said Charley.

"I cannot tell you until I have learned your way," she replied; "and then, when I go back to my county, I can show the people there how gentlemen and ladies breakfast where I have been."

"Gentlemen and ladies don't breakfast so," said Charley; "only we."

"Are not you a gentleman, then?" asked Miss Mansfield; "I thought you were. The young sons of gentlemen in my county are gentlemen themselves."

Charley looked at his sister and laughed.

"Never mind," said Miss Mansfield; "I shall learn by degrees, and then I can show every one wherever I go."

Now breakfast was over, and the school-room was cleared for lessons.

"I don't mean to do any lessons this morning," said Charley.

"Nor I neither," said Edith.

"Shall you tell mamma?" asked Charley.

"What should I tell your mamma?" inquired Miss Mansfield.

"That we don't mean to do any lessons," replied Charley.

"Do you think it would give her any pleasure if I did?"

"Mamma wouldn't mind," said Charley; "she would only say, 'Don't trouble me!'"

"Then we had better mind what she says, — don't you think so?" asked Miss Mansfield. "I think we had better not tell her anything, until we can tell her something that will be a pleasure."

"I don't think anything is much pleasure to mamma," said Edith; "she is always tired, or afraid of a noise, or distracted in her head, if we run and play."

"Then I think we had better play where she wont hear us; don't you think so?"

"Can you play?" asked Charley.

"Yes, I can play a great many games that children who are gentlemen and ladies play in my county; but you see, you will have to teach me your way."

"Can you play 'Cross Questions and Crooked Answers,' and 'Hunt the Slipper,' and 'Tom Tiddler's Ground,' and 'Fox and Goose,' and 'Blindman's Buff?'" asked Charley.

"Yes, I can play all those, and a great many more; and we can play at one of them every evening, if you like, and we can find a place where we shall not distress your mamma. What a beautiful morning it is! I can see the butterfly dancing over the lawns, and sipping the sweet flowers. Don't you think we had better take a charming walk, and you show me where you like best to go?"

"Yes!" said Edith. "Yes!" said Charley, a little surprised. "You are not like our other governesses: they were always saying, 'Lessons first! Lessons first!'"

"I have a great respect for all good books," said Miss Mansfield. "I cannot put a book into any one's hand who would not value the use of it. Shall I put on my things, and we take this pleasant walk now?"

"Yes," said the children, and they ran to prepare.

The walk was a charming one, for Miss Mansfield had loved reading from a child, and had stored her memory with the history of insects, birds, and animals, with many tales of them, and whenever the children were tired, she sat down with them beside her. In this way the walk lingered on, and they were not home in more than time to prepare for the one o'clock dinner.

"Miss Mansfield, I mean to sit by you," said Edith.

"And so do I, too," said Charley.

"Do the people in your county eat their dinners in the same way in which they eat their breakfast?" inquired Miss Mansfield.

"Oh, no! quite different. That was only Charley and me," said Edith.

Mrs. Collins looked very much surprised at seeing the children hastening to arrange to have Miss Mansfield between them: they looked also blooming and happy, and were very hungry.

"My dear children, I cannot have you eat so much! Miss Mansfield, will you see to that?"

"Shall I help you, and show you how it is done in my county?" asked Miss Mansfield.

"Yes," said Charley; and the confusion ended.

After lunch the children went off with Miss Mansfield, to their mamma's surprise and satisfaction. They showed their new governess everything. On visiting the poultry yard, Miss Mansfield suggested that they should each choose one of the birds under coops as their own, and gather up all the crumbs at breakfast, and come and feed it. With some difficulty they each at length made a choice; and then two plates were kept, one for each, into which the crumbs were put as soon as made, and the table by degrees became very neat.

The first afternoon, when all the sight-seeing and showing was over, Miss Mansfield proposed that they should all make little sofas and rest, for they were all very tired; and she read to them some tales of kings and queens, which greatly interested them. After tea she brought out a little pink frock, very pretty, and asked Edith if she would like to do a little piece every day, until she had made it, and then she could have it for her own, and give it to the first dear little cottage child they might find who might want it. Edith agreed. And Charley was pleased to color some pictures by her side, with her to direct and take interest in all. In this way they lived for

a week, she making holiday with them; though more was learned by the children, of useful knowledge, in that week, than in months of ceaseless opposition before.

But Miss Mansfield knew there was no royal road to learning, — that application and labor must come at last. But by this happy companionship for a few days, she had won the confidence and the affections of the children, and learned their dispositions and tastes. They also found her companionship in all things a charm against the weariness and disputes that spoiled each day before; and she felt they would not very readily give up her presence now.

At the end of a week, Miss Mansfield proposed they should make a plan for the day; they should all think it over, arrange it, and she would write it down, and they would each sign their names, that it might hold good. There was a whole evening's consultation over this important plan. Charley wished all the lessons left out that he did not like; but Miss Mansfield proposed that they should all be admitted, but each one allowed only one half-hour; it would be satisfaction to have done them, and this could tire no one. So the plan was completed at length, signed by each, and the next day it was to begin its regulation of life. Miss Mansfield laid her watch on the table, that they might keep true time. The first lessons went off smoothly; some of them were so pleasant, as done with Miss Mansfield, that the chil-

dren wished them not to end with the half-hour; but Miss Mansfield said, "We cannot break our agreement; we must leave off now!" Then came Charley's sum; Charley had a great objection to any and every arrangement of figures, and when the half-hour ended the sum was not done.

"We cannot finish it now," said Miss Mansfield; "this is the first half-hour we have wasted to-day."

"Have I wasted any yet, Miss Mansfield?" asked Edith.

"No, not one yet; and you will see Charley will not to-morrow; he is a little boy,—younger than you; so it was not to be expected he should conquer at first."

The children found that the lesson was always put away according to the agreement at the half-hour's end, whether done or undone; and it was much more pleasant to have the feeling it was done, which proved an incentive to trying. And, as no lesson ever lingered on, they did not get weary, but felt the freshness of change.

At length, one day, Charley was sadly out of humor; he had failed in his first lesson, and would not try the next; he wished to pass it over, and take one he liked better. Miss Mansfield said, "No, I cannot break the agreement; we all made it together, and we must all keep it together."

"I don't care about it," said Charley, "and I don't mean to keep it any more."

"That would not be honorable," said Miss Mansfield.

"I don't care," said Charley; "I wont keep it any more!"

"Then," said Miss Mansfield, "if you are too much of a little boy to understand about keeping an agreement, you must learn to mind what is said to you, and do it because I tell you."

"I shall learn what I like, and when I like," said Charley.

"Well, my dear boy, I cannot make you obedient, if you do not love it for its own sake. Now I must attend to Edith."

But Edith soon followed in Charley's disobedience, and did not wish to do her lesson.

"Then you must both find your own employment until school hours are over," said Miss Mansfield.

"O Charley," said Edith, "Miss Mansfield says we may do as we like!"

"No, dear, I did not say you *may* do what you like, but you *must* do what you like; and I am afraid you will find a great difference between the two." But the children took out their drawing-paper and paints, and began to copy and color.

"I cannot make this come right, — how tiresome; Miss Mansfield, will you just draw that one little hard bit for me?"

"No, Charley, I cannot help you in play, because your work is not done."

"How disagreeable!" said Charley.

"I can get on alone," said Edith.

But very soon the paper was messed, and the drawing left in disorder.

"I shall read a story," said Edith.

"Read it to me," said Charley.

"Oh, no, I cannot; I am so tired!" said Edith.

"Oh, dear," said Charley, looking out of the window, "what a tiresome long morning this is!"

At length it was twelve o'clock.

"There, Miss Mansfield," said Edith, "it is twelve o'clock. Will you come out?"

"Yes," answered Miss Mansfield, in her pleasant way, "we have lost our happy morning of work, but we must not lose our walk; let me help you to put all these things away."

By Miss Mansfield's help, the things were all put neatly away, so that when they came out again there might be no traces of that morning's disorder, but all looking fresh. Then they set out on their walk; they had not gone very far before Charley said, "Let us sit down, I am so tired! and you tell us a story, Miss Mansfield."

"We will sit down if you like, but I cannot tell a story today."

"Why not?"

"Because we have not kept our agreement of work, and a story is play."

"You can tell us one about some king out of the

English history," said Edith; "and history is a lesson, not play."

"I cannot attend to lessons now," said Miss Mansfield; "the happy lesson time is all wasted away and I feel more inclined to cry about a little girl and boy alive now, than to tell of kings who died long ago."

"I mean to ask mamma," said Charley, "if I may not do which lesson I like first, and you will see she will say I may."

Miss Mansfield made no reply.

At the early dinner Charley took his place by his mamma and said, "Mamma, Miss Mansfield will not let me do the lesson I wish first. May I do my lessons in the way I like best?"

"Yes, my dear; I do not see that it can make any difference which you do first."

"Will you tell Miss Mansfield then, mamma, that I may do which I like first, for she will not let me?"

"Miss Mansfield," said Mrs. Collins, "Charley wishes to choose the lesson he likes to do first; I see no objection to that."

"I can teach no other lesson," said Miss Mansfield, gravely and calmly, until obedience is learned."

"Well, I must leave you to manage as you best can," said Mrs. Collins; "if you can teach that, your power exceeds mine!"

"Now, Miss Mansfield," said Charley, in the schoolroom, mamma says "I may do which lesson I like."

"You may do what you like by yourself, Charley, but I cannot teach you anything until you have learned to obey. When you have learned to obey we will change our paper if you like, and put the sums and the reading wherever you wish."

"I don't wish to put them anywhere," said Charley.

"Then we must wait, dear," said Miss Mansfield.

"No, but I cannot wait; I am tired of waiting."

"Then bring me your reading-book, and let us try together, and see how soon the lesson will be done. Do you know what the consequences will be if you do not learn to obey?"

"No," said Charley, rather interested at the idea of "consequences."

"Then I will tell you: if you do not learn to obey, you will grow up a poor, lonely, desolate man; no one will mind what you say, and you will have no true friends, and no blessing from God in heaven."

"Then here is the book," said Charley: "how long must I read?"

"Only one half-hour. Look, here is my watch, and we will read it together."

After this day there was no more continued contention, but still the reading lesson always proved heavy; even the sums had become a less trouble than this.

Miss Mansfield was often thinking how best to ease the little boy's trouble in learning to read, when

one day, on crossing a common about a mile from the house, they saw a rough-made chair upon wheels at a lone cottage door, and a pale-looking boy in it.

"Do you see that little boy? I am afraid he is lame. Shall we go and speak to him?" said Miss Mansfield. So they went.

"Are you lame, little boy?"

"Yes, I be."

The mother in the cottage, hearing some one speaking to her child, looked round and said, "Yes, he fell when an infant; his sister was running with him in her arms, and he is wholly a cripple. His father has made him that chair to get him out of my way a bit; for he is a torment within, never content for five minutes together."

"Can he read?" inquired Miss Mansfield.

"How should he?" said the woman: "there is never a school within two miles of here, not one for teaching the poor, and neither his father nor I know so much as a letter."

"Poor little boy!" said Miss Mansfield: "what could we do for him, Charley? He can never run about as you do, you see, and he looks so unhappy. Don't you think you and I could wheel him as far as that bridge where the blackberries grow, and gather him some?"

"Yes, that I could, alone by myself," said Charley, and both little hands grasped the chair, and he bent his back for a push.

"I too!" said Edith.

"Go, go!" said the poor little boy.

"Will you trust him a little while with us?" asked Miss Mansfield of his mother.

"Yes, the longer the better," said his poor mother. "I often do say I must get him taken into the workhouse, for he wears my life out, only his father is always for keeping him here."

So they set out together, Miss Mansfield between the two children. The poor little cripple was a very light weight, and they pushed him gently along. When they reached the blackberry-hedge Miss Mansfield pulled down a branch to the chair, and the poor little cripple, for the first time in his life, gathered blackberries himself; his pleasure was extreme, and his hunger seemed great. They stayed as long as possible, the poor little cripple being very unwilling to leave the blackberry-hedge; but at length they were obliged to push him back again to his mother's cottage door.

"What is your name?" Miss Mansfield asked of the little cripple, before they left him at his mother's door.

"Me," he answered.

"He calls himself 'Me,'" said the woman, "and we get in the way of calling him so; but his name is Meshech."

"Ask little Me if he would like you to come again," said Miss Mansfield to Charley.

"Shall I come again?" said Charley.

"Yes, yes," said little Me.

"Ah, do," said the poor woman; "it will be a charity, I can tell you." And poor little Me looked wistfully after them.

"He did not like to leave the blackberries, did he?" said Edith.

"No," answered Miss Mansfield. "I am afraid he was hungry."

"Why does not his mother give him all the food he wants?" asked Edith.

"Perhaps she is very poor," answered Miss Mansfield, "and cannot buy much."

"I can take him some food next time," said Charley.

"Don't you think you could teach him to read, Charley?"

"I don't know about that," answered Charley.

"Poor little boy!" said Miss Mansfield; "how tired he must be sitting all day and every day in that chair, and nothing to amuse him! but if he could read, what a happy boy he might be!"

"I can teach him his letters," said Charley, "and 'a-b, ab.' I know all that, and more too."

"Suppose, then, we try. Shall we take up that pretty book with pictures to every letter? You have quite done with that now. It is tumbling to pieces, but we can make a new cover."

"Yes," said Charley. "When shall we go?"

"We can go to-morrow, if fine, and take something in a basket for the little boy, and you can give it to him if he tries to learn his letters. Edith and I can have a chair from the cottage, and see about our knitting while you teach Me to read."

"That will be delightful," said Edith, "because mamma will not know anything about it if we knit it up there, and you know it is to take her quite by surprise."

"I wish to-morrow were come," said Charley. "I wonder how many letters that little boy will learn in a day? I know them all."

"I think, Charley, you and I must read together a little of an evening, for I fancy that little boy will learn very fast, and I should not like him to find that you could not teach him any more."

"I think we had better," said Charley. "I shall soon learn; you will see, he will not get up to me."

In the evening Charley said to his mother, "Miss Mansfield and I are going to read a little together mamma, so I must run away now."

"I wonder what next!" said Mrs. Collins. "Miss Mansfield works wonders I never expected to see."

"O mamma, I can tell you," said Edith; "you see you don't know, but there is a poor little lame boy on the common; we pushed him in his little chair to gather blackberries to-day, he was so hungry; and Charley is going to teach him to read."

"What will that do for his hunger?" said Mrs.

Collins; "you had better take him some food. And as to Charley teaching him to read, it is nonsense, when he cannot read himself."

"Indeed, mamma, you don't know about it; he is going into two syllables directly, and Miss Mansfield and Charley are going to read together very often, because Miss Mansfield thinks the little lame boy will learn very fast."

"Your son will turn out a scholar instead of a dunce, after all," said Mr. Collins to his wife.

"I don't know by what charm Miss Mansfield persuades," said Mrs. Collins, "but she works wonders with Charley in more ways than one."

"And with me too, mamma," said Edith; "only you don't know yet, and you are not to know because it is to be a surprise."

Me was delighted, when, on the next visit, the picture-alphabet was produced. He could not at first be persuaded to attend to the letters from delight at finding out some object he knew, — an acorn, a cat, or a cow. Miss Mansfield feared for Charley's patience when she heard him say "Naughty boy! mind your letters. Now say this — A." But poor little Me was too much used to rough words to feel much at hearing them, and, Charley being the first friend he had ever had, he soon began to pay attention to all that he said, and to welcome his visits with eager delight; and Charley's affectionate heart soon responded to this love, and he grew patient and gentle

in the lessons he gave. Edith, too, found that her little pink frock would be just the size for the little black-eyed child, the youngest at home. And the poor mother was cheered by the interest taken in her children, and when the little lame boy shouted, "O mother, he is coming!" she would step out to look. Or when the day was wet and Charley could not come, the little lame boy sat within, intent on his book, his poor mother wondering that he picked up learning so fast. All this changed the life of the poor crippled boy, and changed the dull look of life for his poor mother, too; her voice grew more gentle and kind, and the sunshine of love brightened round little Me.

Charley, too, became a reader, not of words alone, for his heart was wakened up, and the heart helps the head; books found the response of living sympathies in him. Meanwhile Edith knitted on with patient care a winter shawl to surprise her mother, and took all the notice she possibly could of her little cottage friend, Meggie. This success had been gained by calling forth an interest in others, instead of the children's young energies falling back on themselves. Little Me proved an incentive to Charley that no personal indulgence could have been. Self had been surfeited in these children, as it may be feared it is with too many. A new toy would have been wasted on Charley, who already had an over-abundant supply; but a little friend dependent